



THE CANDY CANE

The candy cane has long been a Christmas tradition and was said to have been the creation of a Christian candy maker. Its sweet peppermint taste has been enjoyed by young and old for years.

The candy maker started with pure white candy to symbolize Jesus' innocence (Heb 4:15) and the holiness of the sinless Son of God (1 John 1:7).

The white also shows the virgin birth of Jesus: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son..." (Matt 1:23).

He made the candy hard because the church is built on solid rock and God's promises are a firm foundation (Matt 16:18, 1Thess 5:24), and that Jesus is like a "rock", strong and dependable. (Psalm 31:3).

Next the candy maker made the candy in the shape of a 'J' for the name of Jesus who came to earth as our Saviour (Matt 1:21, Acts 4:12). When the candy was turned upside down, it is the shape of the Good Shepherd's staff (John 10:11). "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep".

Finally he stained the candy with red stripes. The colour red symbolizes God's love that sent Jesus to give His life for us on the cross (John 3:16).

The large red stripe is for the blood Jesus shed for our sins on the cross (Eph 1:7). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"

The smaller stripes remind us of Jesus' suffering and our redemptive healing (John 19:1-30).

So this Christmas when you see a candy cane, remember that they're not just candy canes. Instead they are a symbol of the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Author Unknown



Christmas On Horseback OR

A True Story by Deborah J. Miller (abridged)



There were three churches in his circuit. Poppy used a horse to get between churches and

was known as a "circuit rider."

It was not an easy profession, but circuit riders were responsible for spreading religious teachings in many isolated areas.

Mommy, meanwhile, pinched a penny every way she could and made things do and redo. Though she always had a little gift for a new neighbour, she had a reputation for being extremely frugal.

Throughout her life, her favourite gift to newlywed couples was a jar of

bacon grease. "You need bacon grease to cook," she would announce. "And I presume you don't have any yet."

She always made her own clothes and the children's as well. And she made Poppy's first suit-at that time, the only suit he had. Until her dying day, Mommy talked about how she worked and slaved over that first suit to get it to fit Poppy just right. The measurements, the sewing, the fittings, the cutting-Mommy pored over every inch of that suit to make sure it turned out perfect.

Just when Mommy had finished the precious suit, a rider came from a distant village. A former member of one of his churches had died. Poppy remembered the deceased man clearly. He was not particularly well regarded by the community, but he'd been loved by his family.

"Could you get to the home in time to preach the funeral tomorrow

morning?"asked the rider.

Poppy could if he left immediately. He packed his only suit, prepared his horse, and rode through a good portion of the night. He was dressed in what he considered his "riding clothes." If he encountered trouble (like a flooded creek or a muddy path), his packed-up suit would still be clean and ready for "preaching." ---*continued on back*

Christmas All Year

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as you can.

- John Wesley



A True Story
by Deborah J. Miller (abridged)

He arrived at the home of the deceased at daybreak. The funeral would be at the home, but instead of being held in the morning, it had been delayed until the afternoon. As was the custom then, the body of the deceased was in the parlour, and the local ladies were going to dress him. There seemed to be only one problem: They couldn't find any "decent" clothing.

Poppy was invited to sleep in a spare bed until an hour before the funeral. Meanwhile, his suit was hung up to remove the wrinkles. An hour before the funeral, he was awakened by calls from the parlour.

"Reverend Miller! Come and see! We found the most beautiful suit." The ladies talked all at once. "This will make the family feel so much better. We have no idea why we didn't see it before!"

Not wanting to meet the ladies in his long underwear, Poppy wandered from room to room. Where had his suit gone? "I'll be right there, ladies. Just let me find my suit."

He came across his riding clothes, but not his suit. He could not find the suit Mommy had put so much love and care into. He found the hired hand who had taken the suit

earlier. "It was right here," confirmed the young man. He had hung it exactly where Poppy was looking.

Suddenly, Poppy heard the ladies in the parlour again. They were talking to an early arrival. "You know he never spent any money on clothes, but look-we found this nice suit hanging like it was waiting for him."

Poppy dressed in his riding clothes and went to the parlour to confirm his suspicions. The ladies greeted him, "You know Reverend Miller, we were worried. His clothes were rather old and ragged. The family loved him very much and they want to show the community how much they loved him. They wanted him to look respectable before he was buried and that didn't seem possible, until we found this suit."

There it was, Poppy's only suit. His only suit that Mommy had worked on for so long, with so much love and care. After complementing the ladies on how nice the body looked, my great-grand-father returned to the bed where he had slept, sat down, and weighed his options.

At home was a formidable and frugal woman. (Many years later, when she was in her 80's, a teenager made the mistake of trying to steal Mommy's purse. She beat him to the ground and sat on him until the police officers arrived.) In front of him was a family who loved their husband and father, a family who wanted their loved one to look respectable in the eyes of the community.

He had ridden through the night to be with a family who wanted to say goodbye to their husband and father. This family wanted to be

comforted by him and the community.

In Poppy's eyes, there was only one solution. He had to leave the suit where it was. It would be six feet under soon, but Mommy would understand. At least, he hoped she would understand.

According to family legend, Poppy delivered one of the most moving orations ever preached in Indiana that day. Before or since, the story goes, there has rarely been an oration delivered with such emotion. The listeners cried, they laughed, they shouted, and they sang.

Among the family, however, there is some debate over whether Poppy was preaching about the loss of the deceased or the loss of his suit.

It doesn't really matter. The family of the dead man was greatly comforted, and the community saw that the family loved him. After Poppy left, returning home to face Mommy, the community continued to comfort the grieving family.

Poppy lost his only suit that day. Many times since I've thought about that story and tried to follow his example: Choose what is right, not what is easy. Lead by example, not just by words. Or, as they say now, "Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk."

Could I have done what Poppy did that day? I'm not sure. Mommy was certainly intimidating at any age. But Poppy had other suits later, so they must have come to some kind of agreement, eventually. Mommy had faith and believed in doing the right thing, just like Poppy did.

That's what I try to remember when making a decision: Have faith. With faith you are never wrong. More poorly dressed, perhaps, but definitely not wrong.