

PISTOLS are fired early on Christmas morning to salute the new born Christ child.

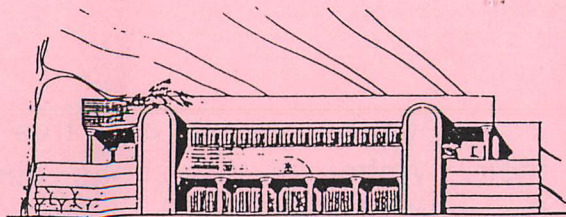
GUSLE is the Serbian national instrument. At Christmas time the male head of the house sings ballads about Christmas accompanied by the gusle.

FOLK COSTUME (male) - men dress in their best traditional costume on Christmas day.

#### Acknowledgements

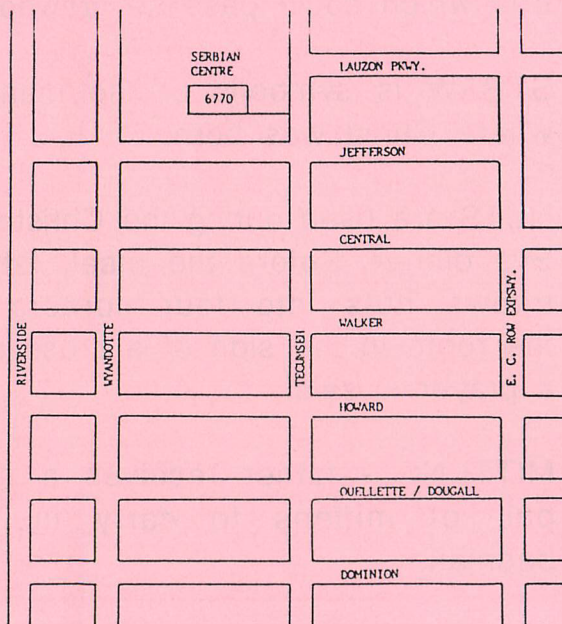
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Mr. Branko Budimir  
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 Mrs. Snjezana Gacesa  
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### SERBIAN COMMUNITY CENTRE

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#### MUSEUM HOURS

Monday-Friday: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Sunday: 2 p.m.-4 p.m.

*Groups welcome by appointment.*

*Serbian Heritage Museum,*

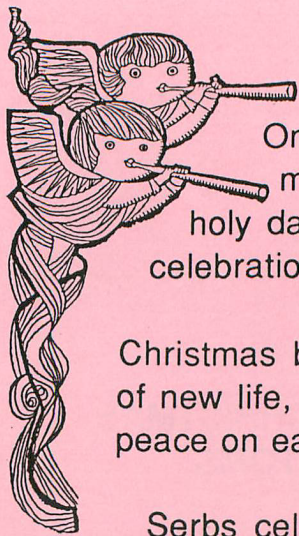
## SERBIAN CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

Exhibit  
 November 21 - December 17, 1993



**ХРИСТОС СЕ РОДИ!**





One of the greatest and most joyful Christian holy days is the day of the celebration of Christ's birth.

Christmas brings the message of new life, new hope and peace on earth.

Serbs celebrate Christmas on January 7th which, according to the old Julian calendar is December 25th.

The celebration begins on Christmas Eve and continues, with special customs and rituals, through the Christmas Day. These customs have best been preserved in Serbian villages, but are also observed in towns and cities, as well as outside of Serbia, in the lands where Serbian immigrants have established their new homes.

This exhibit attempts to illustrate the various activities which are part of the traditional Serbian Christmas.

BADNJAK is the Serbian Christmas tree. One theory states that Serbs

accepted the young oak tree as their symbol of Christmas during the time of the Turkish occupation. As they were not allowed to celebrate their religious holidays openly, a decorated evergreen tree was more conspicuous than the oak tree which could pass as firewood.

STRAW is symbolic of the manger where Christ was born.

NUTS are used during the Christmas Eve dinner. Before the meal, father throws nuts into four corners of the room in the sign of a cross and a prayer is said.

MITTENS - father receives a new pair of mittens to carry in the badnjak.

WHEAT, WINE AND OIL are part of the badnjak ritual. The tree is blessed with wheat, wine and oil, and then it is carried into the house.

CANDLE, the symbol of light, ICON, the patron saint of the family and CANDILO, are part of the religious ritual at Christmas time.

CESNICA is the Christmas bread shared with members of the family. Prior to baking, a silver coin is placed inside the dough. This is a symbol of good luck and prosperity for the member of the family who finds it in his/her piece.

CUTURAS - flask used for plum brandy called slivovica. Many toasts are proposed during the Christmas season.

CHRISTMAS DINNER TABLE is always set with the family's best. This makes the Christmas dinner a festive occasion.

FOLK COSTUME (female) the best traditional dress is saved to wear on Christmas Day.

PLAZAJNIK - the first male guest to enter the house. He greets everyone with the traditional greeting "Christ is born!" He performs a special badnjak ritual wishing the family health and prosperity. Polazajnik receives traditional gifts and is given a place of honour at the dinner table.