

Iowa Staters Go Caroling

Christmas caroling, Iowa State version, is steeped in long-standing custom of its own, says Frances Kerekes

THE traditional custom of caroling has become an integral part of every Christmas celebration, whether or not the celebration is in England, Norway, Spain or on the Iowa State campus.

During several centuries past, wrapped in the penetrating chill of an English fog, carolers' thin voices have been raised in "God Bless You, Merry Gentlemen," while in Norway, where the sun sets late behind the green firs, groups have passed, singing "Lullaby, My Little Son." Far to the south, where even late December is mild, Spanish carolers have combined their rich voices to sing "Presents Al Nino Jesus."

Drawing from the varied heritage of European traditions, Americans have been able to form caroling customs of their own.

On the Iowa State campus, caroling takes its place beside fall quarter final examinations, the brightly lighted and decorated Christmas trees and the cleverly wrapped gifts for the family at home as one of the familiar harbingers of December 25.

The first indication of Yuletide activity appears when the Iowa State Women's Glee Club presents a program of carols soon after Thanksgiving. At the front of the pine-scented church they sing the ancient and modern carols which tell of Christ's birth.

On the last Sunday morning before Christmas vacation, the women's dormitories at Iowa State have a

traditional Carol Breakfast. A procession of white frocked women bearing lighted candles is formed in the halls as women come out from their rooms to join the caroling groups. The caroling is terminated in the candle-lit dining room and followed by the last Sunday morning breakfast of the quarter.

In previous years Cardinal Key and Mortar Board, men and women's honorary organizations, have gone caroling just before Christmas vacation. Most of the churches at Iowa State are active in maintaining the traditional caroling customs. Adhering more faithfully to the original concepts of caroling, many of the parishes have annual carol-singing services after which a selected group is transported to the homes of people who are elderly, sick or otherwise unable to participate in the Christmas festivities. Carols are sung beneath their windows and the evening is brought to a close with refreshments, as in the days of the English was-sailers.

For almost a thousand years after Christ's birth, the ballad-type Christmas song was considered too vulgar for a religious celebration. Songs during this time were mainly used as an accompaniment for dancing. It was St. Francis of Assisi who, in the early part of the thirteenth century, introduced caroling. Because of their melodic tunes and simple rhymes, carols proved to be a more popular method than Latin services for diffusing a knowledge of the Christmas stories.

From Italy the carol traveled to Spain, Germany, France and England, retaining its more fundamental characteristics while gaining new variations. In southwest Europe gypsies are included in the stories of the Nativity. In England and France the word "Noel" or "Nowell," meaning news, is used in many of the carols. Although carols originally were in the vernacular, the clergy of the Middle Ages composed Christmas songs in Latin. The popular carols were the Macaronics which contained both languages.



Traditional caroling by church and campus groups is heard often before the Christmas holidays. Members of Mortar Board and Cardinal Key, senior honoraries, are singing a yuletide serenade