



# Get Festive! Old Time Christmas Decorating

By **LESLIE MACPHERSON, Fort Wellington National Historic Site, ON**

## **Promotes: creativity, fine motor skills, appreciation for nature**

What I like the most about being a Parks Canada heritage presenter is that I get to share stories. One of my favorite stories to tell is about what Christmas used to be like for children living at Fort Wellington 200 years ago.

With this Club Parka activity, children can create their own Christmas crafts just like it was done many years ago when one of the jobs of the children at Christmas (besides helping with the cooking) would be to help with the decorations. Ready to decorate? Let's go!

## **ACTIVITY 1: POMANDERS**

Citrus was imported from far away countries and used to be quite expensive. Since it would take weeks to get to North America by ship, a lot of the fruit would spoil. Citrus studded with cloves would be good way to use the fruit if it was starting to spoil. It would also be a practical gift or a scented decoration!

### **YOU WILL NEED**

- Pointed tipped object (ex: letter opener) to be used by an adult
- Oranges or other citrus
- Cloves
- Marker
- Ribbon (optional)

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Draw small dots with the marker where you would like to put cloves in your fruit.
2. Ask the adult in charge of the poker to pre-poke holes.
3. Insert one clove in each of the holes.
4. If you'd like, tie a ribbon around your pomander.
5. Place your pomander on a plate to decorate your Christmas table!



## ACTIVITY 2: EVERGREEN SWAG DECORATION

In the 19th Century, ready-made decorations weren't available in shops. This craft could be made by soldiers and their families to decorate their living quarters at the fort. Children could make decorations out of things that were available in their neighborhood. This evergreen swag encourages the use of natural materials.

### YOU WILL NEED

- 2 or 3 branch clippings (cedar, pine, spruce, fir, etc. When available, choose softer-needled varieties already on the ground.)
- String or twine
- Yarn and ribbon
- Scissors
- Colored wooden beads (optional)



### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take your pieces of greenery; lay them on each other on the table with the stems lined up.
2. Slip your piece of string under the stems and tie them together



3. Use pieces of ribbon and yarn and wooden beads to decorate your swag: wrap them along the branches, tie in knots and let them dangle like tinsel, tie them in bows... be creative!



4. Hang the swag to decorate your home!

With these crafts, you have created beautiful decorations while spending time together. For families at Fort Wellington spending time together was the best part about Christmas. Your house now looks (and smells) like a Victorian Christmas!



*This activity is part of Club Parka, a Parks Canada program for preschoolers offered at national parks and historic sites across the country. Kids can take part in the program online too. Visit [parkscanada.gc.ca/Parka](https://parkscanada.gc.ca/Parka) to get to know Parka, the busy little beaver who helps kids explore the world around them.*

*For more Parka fun, try her other activities, download her mobile app or sing along to her song! And don't forget to watch her videos!*