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World War I Christmas Truce

The Christmas Truce of 1914 is one of the most interesting events that occurred during World War I. In the midst of war and fighting, soldiers along the western front stopped fighting in an unofficial cease fire on Christmas.



Christmas Truce by Harold B. Robson

Where did the truce take place?

The truce took place along the western front in France where the Germans were fighting both the British and the French. Since it wasn't an official cease fire, the truce was different along different points of the front. In some places, the soldiers continued to fight, but in many areas they stopped fighting and agreed to a temporary truce.

What did the soldiers do?

All along the western front, the soldiers behaved differently. It probably depended on what their local commander allowed them to do. In some areas, the soldiers just stopped fighting for the day. In other areas, they agreed to let each other recover their dead. However, at some points along the front, it almost appeared like the war was over. Soldiers from each side met and talked to each other. They gave each other gifts, shared food, sang Christmas carols, and even played games of soccer with each other.

How did it start?

In many areas, the truce began when German troops began to light candles and sing Christmas Carols. Soon British troops across the lines began to join in or sing their own carols. Brave soldiers began to make their way into the area between the two lines called "No Man's Land." They met up with enemy soldiers to exchange gifts and souvenirs.

Response

Some of the generals and leaders didn't want the soldiers to engage in the unofficial truce. Orders came down from the commanders on both sides that the soldiers should not "fraternize" or communicate with the enemy. The generals were afraid that this would cause the soldiers to be less aggressive in future engagements. In future years of the war, truces at Christmas were much more guarded and had basically stopped by 1917.