

# Did You Know That...?

Explorations into Walpole People, Places & History with Ray Boas

## ...WPIX-TV in New York City

premiered a six-minute full-color loop of a Yule Log burning in a fireplace on December 24, 1966? This brought a crackling fire into apartments in the city otherwise deprived of real blazing fireplaces. The origin and tradition of



WPIX Broadcast December 24, 1966

burning a Yule Log goes back centuries, varies, can be confusing, and has changed over time.

In old English the word "yule" describes a festival that occurred in December and January. Traditions with Yule Logs also have roots in Scandinavian pagan rituals. In those areas "yule" derived from "rol", a wheel indicating the changing of seasons. Northern Europeans, like the Vikings before them, celebrated the Festival of Yule in honor of the winter solstice - that changing point in seasons. Families would head off into the woods in search of a hardy oak tree. Returning with a large log, they would burn it to show respect to various gods in celebration of life and prosperity. The

largest end of the log would be placed into the fireplace. The remaining tree trunk extended out into the room and fed into the fireplace as needed. The log would be lit from the remains of the previous year's log and burned through the Twelve Days of Christmas. With modern heating systems, this custom waned, along with it the superstitions and beliefs that differed from region to region.

Developing from the real log tradition, the *Bûche de Noël* (Christmas or Yule Log), became a popular Christmas dessert in France and other countries. It consists of chocolate roll, with fillings, and is designed to look like a tree trunk. It's believed that the dessert was

created in response to French families who didn't have a fireplace for a real Yule Log in their homes but wanted to share in the holiday tradition.



1872 Drawing Illustrating the Christmas Eve ceremony of bringing home the Yule Log.



Yule Log made by eighth grader, Ray Boas, in 1959

Besides the tasty Yule Log deserts, the mention of Yule Log will remind many of decorated birch logs holding candles. When an eighth grader, in 1959, I rode my bike one afternoon, to visit my nearest friend, almost a mile away. He was sawing birch logs. "What are you doing?" I asked. "Making Yule Logs to sell, but I'm not sure how," Roger replied. Well, this young entrepreneur (me) had the solution, we would make samples and go door to door taking orders. I made a trailer for my bicycle, mounting old buggy wheels on a wooden crate, we packed samples, and off we rode days later. Knocking on doors, I asked, "Do you want to buy a Yule Log, Lady?" We charged 50 cents for a decorated log with one hole for a candle, \$1 for two holes, and it may have been \$2 for three holes since it was a larger log, even though the trees were free. Believe we included the candles at that price, but memory does fade after six decades. I do not recall how many we sold, but pictured here is the one I kept for myself, now 64 years later.

Would you like to imagine and bring burning Yule Log warmth into your home? Years ago, I purchased a VHS burning fire tape for Cathy, but now YouTube has many options. The original 1966 production, with music, may be found on YouTube, as well as many other great productions such as "Burning Fireplace 4k and Crackling Fire Sounds." On Netflix is *Fireplace for Your Home*, and the originator has a fan website - [theyulelog.com](http://theyulelog.com) — ENJOY - Merry Christmas.

## FLORENTINE FILMS

Making films in Walpole  
for 40 Years.