Digital Delights
A monthly glimpse into the collections at
Minnesota Reflections
http://reflections.mndigital.org
a project of the Minnesota Digital Library

Holiday Reflections
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This holiday season visit Minnesota Reflections for some holiday cheer. The great thing about Minnesota Reflections is the ability to search on a simple term like “Christmas” or “Hanukkah” and the search engine delves into every book, diary, pamphlet, and newspaper to bring us to items we might never have guessed were there.

The normal school bulletins, especially Normalia from St. Cloud State University Archives, are full of holiday stories and poems. The issue for 1902 contains poems and stories written in a style very different from today’s prose and poetry. Here is the beginning of one example:

IN AFTER YEARS
by Eva E. Sorensen

“Twas a Christmas night,
And the earth was white
With a mantle of fleecy snow;
Which, sparkling and pure,
Was a token sure,
Of the holinight long ago.

Indoors by a fire,
Sits an aged sire,
Thinking of days long past.
And the ringing of bells,
Of earth's joy tells,
As the shadows are gathering fast.

In 16 more stanzas, Eva describes the melancholy felt by the “aged sire,” yet hope and peace comes in the end!

http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/stc/id/3937/show/3922
An 1885 diary from a young man, 17 years old, gives a glimpse of an old-fashioned Christmas Eve and Day:
http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/mpls/id/1200/show/1165

Of course there are excellent holiday photos as well. With the zooming tool, we can see tiny details of gifts, ornaments, and décor.
Hanukkah home decorating in Minneapolis:
http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/jhs/id/477
A Christmas tree in Duluth:
http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/nemhc/id/2402

Where do holiday trees come from? One answer lies in the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center collection.
http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/nemhc/id/4509

And, finally, some New Year gems:

The back cover of the Orpheum Theater program for January 2, 1910, displays a colorful wish for the New Year.
http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/mpls/id/2055/show/2054

A journal by Randolph M. Probstfield, clearly enamored of the weather, reveals his thoughts and activities for the New Year 1874 (journal page 42, click on “View Image and Text” to read the transcription):
January 1. Thursday Therm[ometer] 7 A.M. 18 degrees
Therm [ometer]8 P.M. 20°
Breakfast at Hutchinsons 10 OClock
Drove to Georgetown at 11 A.M.
Arrived home (Hutchs)  6  P.M.
Started for Oakport with Mary9.15 P.M.
Arrived home 11.45 P.M.
Finest Weather on New Year I ever before beheld. W[ind] S.E all day.Hutch renewed pledge to abstain from liquor during the year 1874d[itt]o myself.
http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/mhd/id/713/show/658

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!