

Shivaree ^[1]

Shivaree

by Marilyn Wright, 2006

Shivaree, or chivaree, was a traditional [Mountain](#) ^[2] folk custom staged during the first night that a bride and groom, following the honeymoon, moved into their new residence (even if it happened to be with relatives in their old residence). The attendant loud noises and merrymaking ensured that no one in the neighborhood could sleep through the excitement. The house was surrounded by friends and neighbors, some carrying lighted pine knots. As the parade of well-wishers encircled the house, the men fired guns into the air, the women and children banged on pots or clanged cowbells, and a few creative participants beat the cadence with their own version of a string band. This chaos continued until the couple appeared at the door and invited everyone inside. Simple shivarees required the bride to offer treats of candy or apples, while the groom produced cigars for the men. The women participating in the event brought gifts to help the new housewife set up her household.

An old-fashioned shivaree was not a native North Carolina custom but likely made its way into the Mountain region with the early [German](#) ^[3] or [Scotch-Irish settlers](#) ^[4]. The custom of shivaree was common in New England and the Midwest. Each region imprinted a special twist on the tradition, but there are features to a shivaree shared by all groups.

The merits of a shivaree were numerous. Everyone in the community participated-young and old, male and female. The newlyweds certainly met their neighbors in a friendly if raucous manner and were, in turn, properly initiated into the community. Another important feature of the custom was the collective good cheer and feeling of community everyone shared. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, shivarees were an old-fashioned diversion that was just plain fun.

References:

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Additional Resources:

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<http://www.appalachianhistory.net/2011/07/it-was-like-a-bachelor-party-that-had-gone-bad.html> ^[5]

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[10]

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