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Untiedt, Kenneth L.

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Peas in the Family

by Charles Chupp
The first noteworthy Texas New Year’s celebration was observed in 1851 at Fort McIntosh near the present location of Laredo. The menu consisted of black-eyed peas, corn dodgers and all the water you could drink. Only one discouraging word was heard, and the owner of the voice that said it went to bed hungry.

“I hate black-eyed peas!” was what he said.

“We’re lucky to have black-eyed peas,” a burly celebrant responded. “So we’ll just split your helping amongst the rest.” That quick response caught on, and from that date Texans believed that good luck would befall the consumer of black-eyed peas, if a batch was partook of at year’s beginning.

The first organized resistance to the superstition was led by college students of Texas institutions. The hint of rebellion was first heard on Thanksgiving Day of 1939. The spokesperson for the group was stuffed with turkey and arrogance.

“The gorging of black-eyed peas on New Year’s Day is a foolish practice. We, the collegians of Texas are flat footed opposed to the ridiculous tradition, and we’ll not be a party to its perpetuation. And you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!”

The older and wiser Texans were outraged by the audacity of their rebellious sons and daughters. With tears in their eyes and sorrow in their hearts they pleaded for reconsideration by the youngsters.

“We ain’t eatin’ no black-eyed peas on New Year’s Day!” the students responded. “So what are you gonna do about it?”

“We ain’t gonna let any Southwest Conference team play in the Cotton Bowl!” the selection committee responded. “No peas, no play!”
True to their word, teams from outside the conference were invited. Not one native Texas son suited up for the Cotton Classic. Boston College and Clemson were invited, came, and Clemson pounded Boston College by 6-3. The substitute selections were logical in a way. Bostonians love beans, which the black-eyed pea actually is, and them good ol’ boys from Clemson love that cornbread.

When 1941 rolled around, there was little resistance to black-eyed peas, and so far as I know, there are no native enemies to them today.
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No Black-eyed Peas!

South West Conference