



Frontispiece

Figure 1 - Embossed Nativity Scene Foil Postcard - Printed in Germany - circa 1900s. A magnificent rendition of Mother Mary holding baby Jesus in the Manger surrounded by angles set against a background of a silver moon lighting up the sky.



A PUBLICATION OF **INSERT YOUR DOMAIN OR COMPANY NAME HERE**

A Beary Merry Christmas - How To Create A Homemade Christmas and Incredible Memories!



By **INSERT YOUR NAME HERE**



The Legal Stuff

Copyright & Contacts



Figure 2 - He who strives for the pot of gold at the base of the rainbow finds himself alone in the gathering dusk after the rainbow disappears, miles from home, feeling foolish, having to walk home in the dark. ~ Glenn Carson

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A Beary Merry Christmas - How To Create A Homemade Christmas and Incredible Memories!

Figure 3 - Wishing you a PANDARRIFIC CHRISTMAS!



What Is A Christmas Tradition?

Year In And Year Out. Without Fail.

In its simplest form, a tradition is something we do, either individually or collectively in a group, each and every year around or on a specific date or time.

And, because of this, we call it a “tradition”, because it’s something we, and everyone who knows us, knows we do. Year in and year out. Without fail.

Of course, in this instance, we’re talking about Christmas as that specific time or date when we do these things. Hence the term “Christmas Tradition.”

Some people may give presents to one another. Others may take gift giving to a whole new level and only give gifts to those that are poverty stricken. Still, others



may not give any store-bought gifts and have gift qualifications of those that are only “hand-made” by their loved ones.

Every single family has their own rich, historic, family traditions that go back generations. And others make up their own for a new generation to enjoy.

Figure 4 – Vintage postcard. Lovely Young Woman in Blue Chiffon holding a Bouquet of Pink Rose.
Published by G.G. Co. and Printed in Prussia.



All traditions whether new or old, are practiced greatly upon what each individual family, or person, feels should, or likes, to be done.

Traditions can be simple, or they can be complicated. Say, for instance, that every year, you and your family decide that there should be one new Christmas tree



decoration purchased to mark that year. To preserve that moment in time when your family was together and things were at their best.

In other cases, it can be a bit more complicated. Almost like a ceremony if you will. Take this example:

One family may have lost a dear loved one 2 days before Christmas, or maybe even on Christmas, so every year, before doing anything else, they drive out to visit the cemetery where their dearly departed has been placed. They purchase new flowers or a grave blanket and place it on the grave, paying their respects.

Figure 5 - Unusual and simply beautiful Alfred Mainzer Christmas postcard, with illustration with boughs of a fir tree gently caressing a glowing lit white pillar candle, an open book, and a long stemmed pink Rose bud. Rays of light are filtering into the room in the upper right of the card from an unseen source. Printed In Belgium.



Maybe they have a family prayer or simply have a conversation with their loved one letting them know all the things that have happened throughout the course of the year.

Then, maybe they light a candle. After this is over, they leave the cemetery and return to another relative's home for a wonderful Christmas gathering to further celebrate the life of their loved one and also the birth of Jesus Christ.

Or, maybe a person who doesn't regularly attend Church, or hasn't done so for years, goes to Church only on Christmas Eve, or Christmas Morning.

The point is, a tradition is something that people do every year at the same time, no matter what that "something" is. In this case, we're speaking of a Christmas tradition, which is something you specifically do around Christmas time.

Figure 6 – Tinted vintage postcard. Two Adorable Children posing at the Piano with a small Vintage Christmas Tree atop it. Published by E. A. Schwerdtleger & Co.



This would be where things such as decorating the Christmas Tree, hanging stockings up, wrapping presents, visiting family and friends you don't normally see throughout the rest of the year, going sledding with your children, going to school plays or pageants, going Christmas caroling, collecting donations for local charitable organizations, making cookies or home-made candies, drinking egg nog, and so on, come in to the picture.

Obviously, some things we do are steeped more in history than others. But, every tradition has a history, whether it's a new tradition or one that has been passed on from generation to generation. That's the important part about Christmas traditions.

It's not really the act of doing them that makes them an integral part of our lives. It is how doing them makes us feel inside - and outside, really.

Figure 7 – Traditions! Doing them is what is important, and how it makes us feel.



Now, you may be sitting there wondering, "Why do I put up that Christmas tree every year?" It does seem silly to cut down a tree and bring it indoors. But, there's a rich history behind this tradition. As well as several others that people all over America partake in every year.

And, in the next sections, we're going to learn all about the history of some more well known and followed Christmas Traditions.



The Christmas Holiday - Many Holiday Traditions

Christmas is a yearly holiday when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus and many families exchange Christmas gifts. It is celebrated on December 25th.

Figure 8 - This embossed postcard features two kittens inside a heart shape.
Just look at their adorable faces! Era: 1907 - 1915



There are many holiday traditions including Christmas dinner, sending Christmas cards, visiting Santa, baking Christmas cookies and making homemade Christmas candies. Homes are decorated inside and out with colorful lights and holiday decorations. People usually try to spread goodwill, compassion and peace during the Christmas holiday season.

Some countries celebrate on Christmas Eve, other on both Christmas Eve and Christmas day, while other countries celebrate Boxing Day on December 26th. One church, the Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates Christmas on January 6th. Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas on January 7th. The date is just a tradition and is not considered to be Jesus' actual birth date.



The word "Christmas" actually comes from two words: "Christ's mass." Many of the season's decorations lead back to Christ's birth such as Nativity managers, star ornaments and the giving of gifts.

Christmas day during the Middle ages was more of a festival. King William I of England chose Christmas Day to be crowned king in 800.

During the Reformation, Protestants condemned the celebration of Christmas as mere trappings, while Catholics promoted the festival as a religious event.

Colonial America saw the Puritans disapproving of the trappings of the Christmas celebration and it was outlawed in Boston in 1659 to 1681. However Christian residents of Virginia and New York celebrated the holiday.

Charles Dickens' book "A Christmas Carol", published in 1843 did much to revive the holiday that was to instill goodwill and compassion. Washington Irving also wrote short stories about Christmas and the "Twas the Night Before Christmas Poem by Clement Clarke.

There was great controversy in the 20th century over the nature of Christmas (was it a religious holiday or was it a secular holiday). The issue was brought to trial several times to decide because of the view that a federal holiday was a violation of separation of church and state. On December 6th, 1999, the verdict for *Ganulin vs. United States* declared that "the establishment of Christmas Day as "a legal public holiday does not violate the Establishment Clause because it has a secular purpose." This decision was later upheld on December 19, 2000 by the U.S. Supreme Court. Many Christians believe the holiday has become too secular and it is common to hear cries of "getting back to the true meaning of Christmas" around the holidays.

Where Did American Christmas Traditions Come From?

In order to fully understand why, as Americans, we perform different tasks throughout the celebration of Christmas, it is important to know where exactly each tradition originally came from. That's what this section is all about.



It may be interesting to note that many Christmas traditions we perform during the holiday did not originate in America at all.

Figure 9 - This is a Tucks Christmas postcard dated 1910 and has one white child and one black child on the front.



Remember, when America was just an infant itself, it was comprised of many different peoples from many different countries. And these people had their own "homeland" traditions that they carried right along with them.



The Christmas Tree

It All Began In Germany

Besides a beautiful blanket of freshly fallen, glistening snow, Christmas Trees really make the holiday special. Each one has its own personality. Much like snowflakes.

But, did the tradition begin in America?

Certainly not!

It actually began in Germany. In about the 8th century, there was a missionary that went by the name of Winfred. Later this man attained Sainthood and was called St. Boniface. As the story goes, St. Boniface happened to run across a group of pagan worshipers near an oak tree, who were in the process of making a human sacrifice by means of a small boy, to their god, Thor.

Enraged by what he saw, St. Boniface chopped down the oak tree immediately. Once the tree was down, St. Boniface noticed that a tiny fir tree had miraculously sprung up in its place!

At this time, and forever after, the image of the fir tree was a symbol of Christianity and one of everlasting life.

Not until the 16th century did bringing a living tree indoors become a tradition. There is much speculation as to who exactly this tradition is accredited to. But, here is one scenario.

Around the year 1500, a man by the name of Martin Luther saw an amazing site one winter evening while walking home. Some say it was Christmas Eve. He came across a small patch of evergreen trees in the woods, covered with freshly fallen snow that seemed to twinkle in the moonlight.

Martin Luther thought this was such a beautiful sight, that he wished to share the story with his family.



Figure 10 - Vintage Postcard Christmas Victorian Lady and Child Christmas Tree foreign dated 1911.



Thus, Martin Luther cut down a small fir tree, took it into his home, and decorated it with small, lit candles tied to the branches to recreate what he saw. It is believed that the lighting of the candles was to simulate the stars that shone in the night sky, just as they had done during the first Christmas Eve over the small town of Bethlehem.

That was the earliest documented case of the indoor Christmas Tree. In the above Martin Luther story, more people give him credit for decorating the first Christmas Tree, however.

From 1500 or so up until around 1700, the indoor Christmas Tree was growing as a German custom in certain areas.



After the year 1700 or thereabouts, adding lights and decorations such as apples etc., really made this custom take off and placed it into “tradition” status quickly across the land.

It is even rumored that during the Revolutionary War of 1776, in what is now more commonly known as Trenton, New Jersey, the Hessian soldiers left their posts to celebrate around a candlelit evergreen tree on Christmas Eve, with thoughts of home. Because of this, they were defeated by George Washington and his troops.

Then, around 1848, England’s Queen Victoria was presented with the gift of a Christmas Tree from her husband, Prince Albert. It’s important to note that Prince Albert was of Germanic descent, and therefore, having an indoor, decorated tree would be more traditional to him.

When the people saw the sight of this gorgeously decorated and glowing indoor tree, they decided that “if it was good enough for the Queen we love and admire so much, then it must be good enough for us!” Thus more and more homes across England began including the “royal” tradition of a Christmas Tree into the holiday season.

Eventually, the tradition of an indoor, freshly cut and decorated Christmas Tree became a part of our own American Tradition and was commonplace by the 1960s.

Since then, the Christmas Tree has become a symbol of the American Christmas holiday traditions long steeped in far off culture.

[The Tradition Of The Christmas Tree: Decorated Trees In Your Home](#)

Evergreens were used to decorate homes during winter long before Christmas became a holiday. Evergreens were believed to keep witches, ghosts, evil spirits and illnesses away from homes where they were displayed.



Germany is credited with the traditional Christmas Tree celebration of decorating trees and bringing them into their homes. It is believed that Martin Luther, the 16th century Protestant reformer was the first to add lighted candles to the tree. He wanted to recapture the sparkling stars on a dark night and how the stars illuminated his walk home, so he brought a tree into his home and placed it in the center of the room. He then wired the tree branches with lighted candles.

Figure 11 - Christmas Angel & Gnomes, 1800s vintage postcard. Gnomes at the Christmas tree.



By 1890, Christmas ornaments were arriving in America from Germany and the Christmas tree became popular in the U.S. In the early 20th century most Americans were using homemade ornaments on their trees. While Europeans liked their trees to be small, Americans liked their trees to reach from floor to



ceiling. Popular homemade ornaments included popcorn strings decorated by being dyed bright colors and laced with berries and nuts. Electricity changed the tree to include electric lights and trees began to glow in town squares and in homes all across America, making the Christmas Tree, a American tradition.

Many cities claim to be the first city to have a Christmas tree in America including: Windsor Locks, a city in Connecticut. They claim that a Hessian soldier put up a Christmas tree in 1777 while he was imprisoned at the Noden-Reed House, making it the first Christmas tree in New England.

Easton, Pennsylvania also claims that German settlers put up a Christmas tree in 1816. There is a diary entry made by Matthew Zahm, of Lancaster Pennsylvania, which says a Christmas tree was put up in 1832.

A German immigrant living in Boston, Charles Follen, claimed the custom itself of decorating the Christmas tree. Another German immigrant from Wooster, Ohio is said to have made popular the practice of decorating the Christmas tree by cutting down spruce trees from a wooded area by his town, and having a tinsmith construct a star, he placed the tree in his house, decorating it with paper ornaments and candy canes. He was recognized by the National Confectioners' Association as being the first to put candy canes on a Christmas tree. Those first candy canes were all white though and had no red stripes.

The Christmas tree today is a very important part of the celebration of Christmas. The tree symbolizes life.

You can Learn How to Make a Christmas Decoration

Christmas decorating has become larger and improved throughout the years. Many devoted Christmas decorators embark on their seasonal preparation weeks before the holidays appear. If you are looking to enlarge your decoration assortment, and you would like to include some early celebration spirit to your home, why not find out how to put together a Christmas decoration? You will give a free rein to your creative spirit and have some holiday enjoyment in advance of the hustle and bustle of the season.



How to Make a Christmas Decoration: The Selection Process

With the mammoth selection of holiday decorations that you can learn how to make, it could be particularly difficult to make a judgment about where to begin. The first step in learning how to craft a Christmas decoration should be to understand what sort of crafting you like to do best. If you are handy with a needle and thread, perhaps stockings would be a speedy project for you to whip up on your sewing machine.

Figure 12 – Celebration of colors!. What a great time of year to relish the creative spirit!



If you like finer crafts like crochet or needlepoint, possibly a delicate ornament that will showcase your handicraft would be a first-rate first craft to try. Knitters can make mittens and stockings to hang from the mantle, and woodworkers can construct some hand carved snowmen to embellish a holiday centerpiece. Whether your talents involve wreath-making, flower-arranging, or clay sculpting, there will always be a new Christmas ornamentation that you can learn how to create.

Where to find Craft Patterns

One grand place to locate innovative ideas in regard to how to make a Christmas decoration is in craft and hobby magazines, as these periodicals will demonstrate to you the latest trends in your preferred crafts, and give you some brand new ideas to smarten up many of the old favorites. You can also take off to your library to pick up a book or several on Christmas crafts.



The benefit to holiday how-to books is that you can become skilled at how to make a Christmas decoration that goes along with your individual tastes and style. For instance, country lovers can find many country Christmas decorating books, while lovers of the Victorian era will discover an abundance of information and patterns just for them.

No matter what sort of Christmas decoration you make your mind up to learn how to make, try to begin your project as early as possible, to steer clear of the stress of a last-minute flood of "Get it DONE!" Take your time to get pleasure from your craft and do an excellent job on your mission, so the final result will be a handmade Christmas adornment that you will be proud of.

[How To Find A Stunning Christmas Tree Decoration Idea](#)

Everyone is trying to find a great Christmas tree decoration idea! Homespun Christmas trees are moving to the side, it seems, for intricate themed trees with tree limbs full of carefully planned out decorations. Here are some great Christmas tree decoration ideas for your next holiday!

[Decorate With Angels](#)

A popular Christmas tree decoration idea is to decorate the tree with a realm of angels. The main theme of the angel tree is cherubs... kind of like that small angel at Valentine's Day! You will decorate the angel tree with only angels. You can choose angels of any shape, size, or texture. What pulls the angel tree together is that everything on your tree is an angel. You may want to add some strands of white sparkling lights for an added touch of "the ethereal heavens." Be sure to get angels of many assorted types. You might include homemade angels or angels that your kids made at school or church, as well.

[A Color-Themed Tree](#)

Another spectacular Christmas tree decoration idea is to create your tree around an array of coordinating colors. For instance, your Christmas tree decoration theme might be to decorate your tree in USA patriotism, in red, white, and blue



colors. If this is your theme, you will purchase or MAKE decorations, Christmas tree balls, lights, and garland that are all red, white, and blue.

Figure 13 – Choose your colors... and don't worry about a mess! Make your memories and revel in the process.



Other popular color theme ideas are a gold tree, blue tree, white tree, and even pink. Today you can even buy artificial trees that are in any chosen color that will blend into your idea. And the tree will blend into YOUR home, as a very special rendition of our Christmas holidays.

Other Themed Ideas

If your Christmas tree decoration idea does not involve angels or a certain color, there are many other kinds of the Christmas tree decoration idea out there. You may wish to decorate your tree to represent your career. If you are a teacher, you might want Christmas tree decorations that are apples, chalkboards, and other teaching-related items. If you are a "gardener extraordinaire," you can hang tiny flowers and fruits and vegetables on the tree and decorate it with real garden tools!

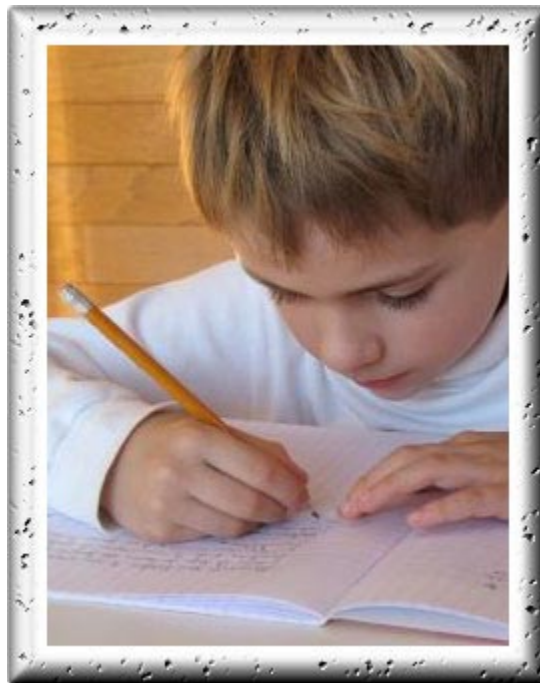
The success to "building" a truly beautiful Christmas tree decoration idea is to think outside the traditional Christmas decoration boxes. For instance, if you want to decorate a tree to honor the fisherman in your life, you can decorate it with real pieces of tackle. Carefully choose colorful tackle and hang it from the tree



with safe ornament hangers, not fishing hooks. You can also purchase decorations that depict tiny fishermen to add to the overall look.

In this same vein, if there is an artist in your family, your unique tree could sport actual art tools such as paint brushes, tiny jars of ink (which will collect and throw the lights!), decorative craft items such as colored hemp twine or colored yarns, and small toys found in craft stores... tiny palettes, artist easels, and small figurines that you will decorate and "clothe" to look like art gallery participants or famous artists!

Figure 14 – An intense young artist! Let your child help design your custom-themed tree!



The Christmas tree decoration idea list is truly endless. Use your imagination, and create a Christmas tree that you will be proud of! The sky is the limit when it comes to decorating the best Christmas tree ever! It will become a favorite family tradition, with the story telling of "how the tree came to be" as a central part of putting together your holiday.



Homemade Christmas Tree Ornaments






A fun family project during the holidays is to make your own Christmas tree ornaments. Here are some easy crafts that will soon have you making your very own ornaments.

Figure 15 – Beads, beads, BEADS! Make sure you have enough beads for all these glorious decorations!








Pinecone Ornaments

Supplies:

-  Pine Cone
-  Paint
-  Beads, glitter or sequins, yarn and small buttons to decorate with
-  Ribbon
-  Glue

Simple Instructions:

-  Cut a 6" length of ribbon.
-  Tie into a circle and glue the tied part to the pointy tip of the pine cone.
-  Paint the cone green
-  While the paint is still wet sprinkle with the glitter.
-  Once the paint is dry you can decorate with beads and sequins to look like ornaments on the tree.



 You can paint the tips white to look like snow.

You can hang on your Christmas tree as an ornament or you can place it on a shelf by putting it into a small clay decorated pot.








Ice Cream Cone Ornament

These are fun to make and anyone over 3 yrs of age can make these.




Figure 16 – Don't forget the glue! Yup, you may need a gallon of glue!









Supplies you will need:

-  Either the cake or the sugar ice cream cones
-  A solid colored ball ornament big enough to sit on the cones
-  White acrylic pain
-  Tiny glass beads
-  Glue or hot glue
-  Spray acrylic
-  Ribbon

What to do:

-  Hold the cone by the base
-  Place glue all along the inside rim of the cone.
-  Place the ball ornament on the cone with the hanging side up












-  Make sure the ornament is dry before doing the next part. (hot glue works faster).
-  Drizzle white paint on top of the ball
-  Sprinkle glass beads on top of the wet white paint.
-  Let this dry overnight
-  Lightly spray the cone part with acrylic. DO NOT GET TOO CLOSE TO THE CONE WHILE SPRAYING as this may melt the cone. This will seal the cone.
-  Tie a colorful ribbon through the loop of the ornament

Your ornament is done!





****NOTE***** if you want to write the child's name and date on the base of the cone before spraying with acrylic it is a nice touch.

Balloon Tree Ornaments

You will need:

-  Balloons that are small and round
-  Liquid Starch
-  Newspaper cut into little pieces
-  Corn seeds
-  Glue
-  Gold paint
-  Matches
-  Lace
-  Pin

What to do:

-  Blow up the balloons until they are the size to fit into the palm of your hand.
-  Smear the starch all over the balloon (you can use paper mache if you want)
-  Put the pieces of newspaper all over the starch and then let dry
-  Repeat this procedure until you have 3 layers.



- 🐾 Once the newspaper is completely dry you can use a pin to pop the balloons.
- 🐾 Decorate using the seeds and glue.
- 🐾 Paint it with the gold paint.
- 🐾 Tie lace onto the match
- 🐾 Put the match inside the ornament to be the hanger.

Tie the ornament onto the Christmas tree!

Entertaining Kids With Christmas Crafts

Everyone remembers how difficult it was as a kid to be patient during the weeks before Christmas. There was just too much excitement about presents and candy and having fun with friends; well what was a kid to do? Here are some quick and easy craft ideas to help you entertain your kids during the pre-Christmas season this year.

Figure 17 – Our modern tools are wonderful! Let your kids prepare and plan their decorations on their computer!



Christmas Cards

Instead of spending a lot of money buying commercial Christmas cards in the store, how about having your kids make Christmas cards to send out to family and friends? Cards are easy to make and can be done using craft material you can find around your home or purchase inexpensively in a local craft store.

Figure 18 – Use craft materials you have hanging around, or can purchase very inexpensively in craft shops.



Here Are Some Card Ideas To Get You Started.

Photo Christmas Cards

Use photos you already have or take some specifically for the cards. These are great for grandparents, aunts and uncles because they love seeing updated pictures of the kids.

- Use card stock or construction paper for the card and cut out a rectangle, square, or circle in the middle of the front of the card.
- Lay a favorite photo of the kids on the inside over the cutout so that the photo shows through on the front of the card.



Figure 19 - Children at Christmas with Tree and Snow and bell. Vintage Real Photo Postcard.



- 🐾 Decorate the card with holiday stickers and crayon drawings from the kids...
- 🐾 And you have a winning card that anyone would treasure.
- 🐾 Make sure you remember to place a poem or short holiday greeting on the inside of the card.

[“We Love Treats” Cards](#)

What a great card! Nothing like something good to eat along with a Christmas wish! Use cardstock or construction paper to make the card and then

- 🐾 Find some winter scenes from an old magazine.
- 🐾 Paste or glue the scenes on the front of the card.



- 🐾 On the inside of the card tape an envelope of hot chocolate drink mix, dry soup mix envelope or a tea bag to the inside of the card.
- 🐾 Write a warm greeting and place some XXX000 (Kisses and Hugs :-) and the child's name.

Figure 20 – Let your children decorate their cards... Don't forget the XXX000's (Kisses and Hugs :-)



Wreaths

Wreaths are special at Christmas time because they celebrate the circle of friendship. Make this season special around your home by decorating the doors with special holiday wreaths.

Cereal Wreath

Take a white paper plate and have the kids paint with green non-toxic paint all around the outer edge of the plate (if no edge have them paint like an inch or two in). Once the plate is dry have them cut out the inner circle of the plate.

Have on hand colored cereal in different shapes. Glue the cereal pieces to the green part of the plate. Now attach a big red bow to the bottom of the plate and you have a beautiful handmade cereal wreath to display on one of your doors.

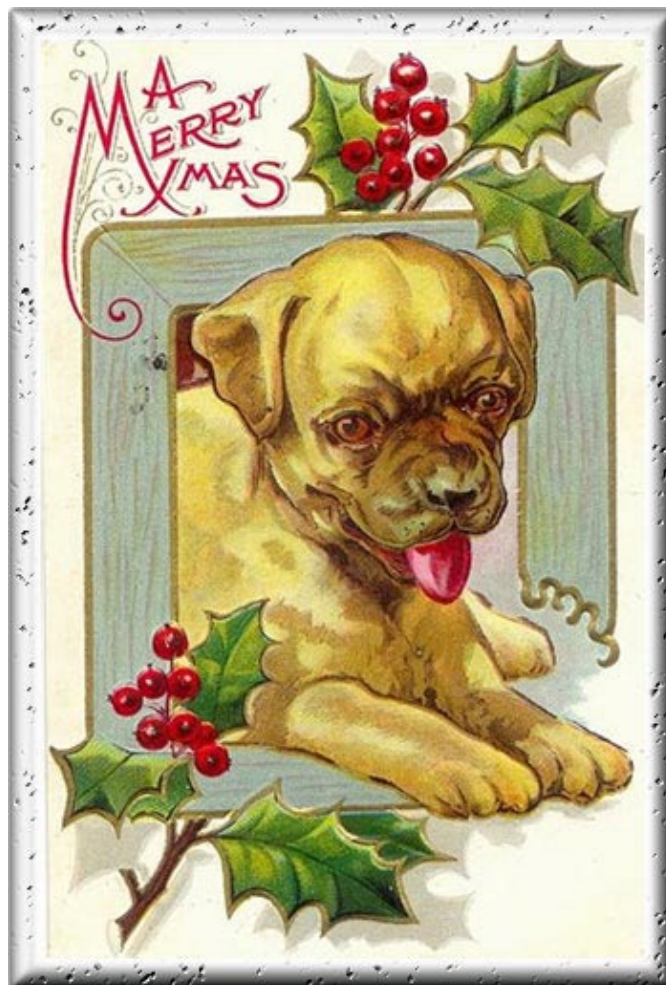


Card Wreath

Take a large piece of cardboard and draw a circle. Now cut out the circle and draw another circle in the middle so that you leave at least 6" all around the outside of the circle. This is your wreath!

Now go get all those old Christmas cards you have stashed away in the attic from last year, and the year before, and the year before that. Have the kids go through this pile of old Christmas cards and pick out their favorites. Line them up so they encircle the wreath side by side. You can overlap the cards for a great effect. Now glue the card backs to the wreath where you want them until the entire wreath is covered with Christmas cards. Attach a holiday bow and you have a fantastic wreath for your home.

Figure 21 – What fun, a Christmas puppy! Vintage postcards make great decorations. This embossed postcard features a cute, panting dog. A great postcard to add to one's collection .. whether you're a dog lover or not! Era: 1907 - 1915



Christmas Wish List Tablecloth

What better way to remember what your child wants for Christmas then to make a Christmas Wish List Tablecloth? They are fun for the kids to make and very useful for Santa when it comes to making those special gifts appear.

- 🐾 Purchase a white plastic tablecloth at the store and make sure you have plenty of non-toxic markers on hand.
- 🐾 Place the cloth on the table or floor and give the kids the markers.
- 🐾 Tell them to draw pictures of what they want for Christmas or if they are older have them actually write out their list (in great detail)
- 🐾 This should keep them busy for a while and you will end up with a Christmas craft you will treasure for years.

Figure 22 – Make sure to have plenty of artist's tools, for your creative bunch!



Gift Giving

Logically, for most Christians, the act of gift giving would be symbolic of the first Christmas Eve and the Three Wise Men bestowing gifts upon the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus to celebrate his birth.



And indeed, this is where the tradition of gift-giving began. Of course, throughout the ages, and throughout countless civilizations such as the Romans and Egyptians, subjects would offer up gifts during ancient celebrations or festivals. Unless you are a historian, or scholar, you would not be aware of them.

Figure 23 - This early Victorian lithograph tells such a story! Colors are bright and show a wonderful group of children playing with their toys. All dressed in Victorian clothing and the little one writing with a quill pen. Shows the rich table cloth and old bookcase in the back. I love these old post cards. They are delightful to look at and give so much info on Victorian clothing, furniture and antique toys from that period.



While the concept of gift-giving remains the same, the methods have changed quite a bit over the centuries. From the Victorian era on, gifts, or presents, have been wrapped with elaborate papers, ribbons, and bows. And instead of placing the gifts at the foot of a King, they are now scattered underneath a Christmas Tree, or found snuggled within our Christmas Stockings.



Even though some might lose sight of where the tradition of gift giving began, the message these gifts brings forth is that of wonder, happiness, and surprise.

Figure 24 – Your card – or your child’s card – are heirlooms in the making.










And everyone knows that the message that goes along with the gift also becomes a part of the treasure. Your card will bring back memories every time your special person thinks of the present... and YOU!

Make Your Own Christmas Cards

If you are on a real tight budget this Christmas or just love to be crafty during the holidays, here are some wonderful homemade Christmas card ideas for you to try this holiday season.

Potato Stamp Cards

Supplies you may need for your homemade Christmas Cards:

-  Paper Bags or Craft Paper
-  Potatoes or Sponges
-  Paint or colored ink
-  Ribbons
-  Hole Punch
-  Ink Pen
-  Paring Knife (adult supervision)





Plastic Plate



Scissors

Step #1 - Check to see if you can find any leftover envelopes. You can look in old Christmas card boxes or the drawer where mom or dad pays the bills (ask first). If you find any unused envelopes you can use them and you will need to be sure that the cards you make will fit inside these cards.

Step #2 - Measure the envelope (if you didn't find any have mom or dad buy some for you).

Step #3 - Cut out the brown paper bag to be the same height as the card, but twice as wide as the card.

Step #4 - Cut the potato in half with an adult helping you.



Cut out a Christmas tree shape on the exposed side of the potato (white not the skin).



Cut away potato from the outer edge of the tree that surrounds the tree.



You can use three potatoes to cut out different sizes of trees.

Step #5 - Put the paint or ink onto the plastic plate



Dip the Potato Tree into the paint or ink



Now place it on what will be the front of your card (one tree or you can make a group of trees).

Step #6 - Make two holes with the hole punch, about a centimeter apart below the Christmas tree.

Step #7 - Insert one end of the ribbon through the left hole, and then put it through the other hole.



Loop each end around back and through the opposite hole.



Now, pull the ribbon out the front of the card.







Tie the ribbon into a pretty Christmas bow.

Step #8 - Use the scissors to trim the ribbon.



Some Other Crafty Ideas

-  You can stamp more trees on the inside or write a holiday greeting.
-  You can also place Christmas stickers on the card or place crayon ornaments on the trees.
-  You can also decorate the envelopes too.
-  Use the sponge instead of the potato, or buy stamps in the store.

Easy Construction Paper Cards

Every child knows how to make Christmas cards out of construction paper. You just fold a piece of construction paper in half. Decorate the one outside half like the front of a Christmas greeting card and write a greeting on the inside of the card.







Use Christmas colors (green, red, purple). Use Christmas stickers to decorate the cards if you wish.

Left Over Christmas Cards

If your family saves old Christmas cards ask if you can use them to make new cards.

This is also a great idea for “brand new” old ornaments! The more “vintage” the card, the more beautiful the decoration is.

To make these homemade cards you will need:

-  The Old Christmas Cards
-  Construction Paper
-  Glue
-  Pen
-  Crayons Or Markers
-  Scissors

Sort through the pile of old Christmas cards to find the front of your homemade card. Once you find one you like, cut the front off the old card. You can use parts



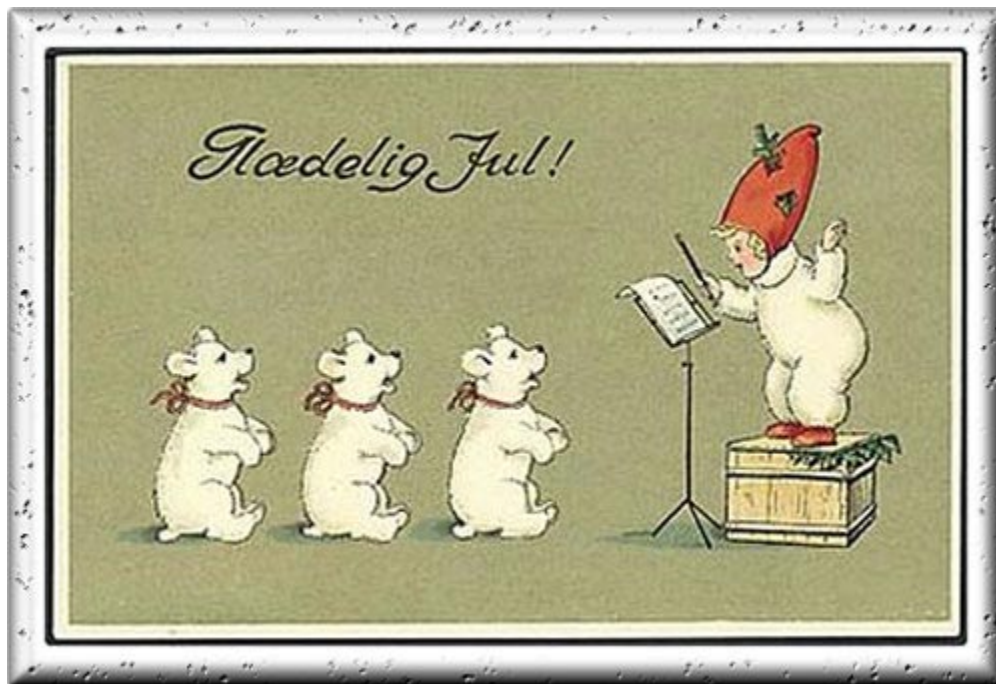
and not the entire front if you like. You can also use more than one old card to make a different picture.

- Fold the construction paper in half.
- Glue the old card picture onto the front of your construction paper card.
- Using the pen, crayons or marker add to the picture, or draw new pictures to go with the old card picture.
- Write a holiday greeting on the inside of the card with your pen. You can copy greetings from the old cards.

More Craft Ideas For Old Christmas Cards

Don't you just love Christmas cards? Most people love to display them during the holiday and then keep them in a storage box for future viewing.

Figure 25 - "Choir" (1922) - European vintage Christmas card, used and mailed in Denmark.
Depicting cute singing teddy bears.









We have enjoyed making various crafts from these old Christmas cards and perhaps your family will love making these Christmas card crafts too.



Candle Holder

Supplies you will need:

-  Old Christmas Cards
-  Small glass jars from jams or baby food
-  Glue
-  Paint Brush
-  Rubber band
-  Salt

What to do:

Step #1 - Cut out a favorite Christmas scene from one of the cards. The size needs to fit on the side of the jar.

Step #2 - glue the back of the picture and place it on the side of the jar

Step #3 - Use the rubber band to hold the picture in place until the glue dries

Step #4 - After the glue dries, remove the rubber band

Step #5 - Use the paintbrush to cover the outside of the jar with glue.

Step #6 - sprinkle the salt over all of the glue to make the jar glisten.






Step #7 - Let the glue dry.

Step #8 - Place a piece of curling ribbon around the rim of the jar and place a candle in the jar



Bookmarks

To make bookmarks from old Christmas Cards you will need to have the following supplies:

-  Old Christmas Cards
-  Cardboard or posterboard
-  Paint, Markers or Crayons
-  Glue
-  Clear Contact Paper

What to do:

Step #1 - Cut a strip from the cardboard or posterboard (which ever you are using), about 8" X 2" in size. Cut a picture from one of the Christmas cards.

Step #2 - Glue the picture that you cut out to the top of the strip. Wait for the glue to dry

Step #3 - Write a holiday greeting or the name of the person you are giving it to.

Step #4 - Cover the new bookmark with clear contact paper or have it laminated.

Figure 26 – Color and more color! Making your own Christmas cards is a wonderful family activity.



The Beauty Of Vintage Christmas Decorations And Cards

Simply put... these are absolutely FREE to use in any way you like! If you even had a yearning to PUBLISH things you've made, you are completely free to do so. The trick is this: You MUST be able to prove that the item is pre-1923. This puts your vintage item in the category of Public Domain, and you can use it in any manner you can imagine!

Digging Up That Old Vintage Christmas Decoration

There are so many areas in which it is now considered appropriate, and even chic, to pull out things from the past (from the distant past) and use them as current fashion and decoration statements.

Figure 27 - This wonderful postcard was made in Germany and mailed to Altoona, Pennsylvania. Showing Pipe smoking Steiff-looking teddy bear in felt or velvet upon hand tooled leather. Circa 1901-07 made by Moore & Gibson, NY.



Vintage Christmas decorations are just one more domain in which it has suddenly become acceptable and is slowly becoming the most stylish way to decorate for the holidays.

Whereas 20 years ago everything had to be brand new in order to be stylish, now things that have a subtle beauty, instead of an overstated Christmas theme, are the preferred type of a vintage Christmas decoration.

Candle holders for example; while 20 years ago red and green Santa Claus and elf candle holders were the norm and the desired style - such candle holders are now considered campy.

It is considered to be much more stylish to pull out your great-grandmother's old silver candlesticks and play some holly berries on a white tablecloth around the candlesticks.

Since vintage stuff is very rarely very specialized for Christmas, you have to use your imagination and create holiday color schemes with fabrics and lighting. This is the understated type of vintage Christmas decoration combined with the style of the 21st century, but borrowing some elements from the past.

[Finding Vintage Pieces](#)

As indicated, there are not very many strictly epoch decorations out there, but you will still have to be a little creative to pull this off. Sure, if you consider the 70s vintage, you'll be able to locate ample items in your own garage, but if you're seeking early 20th-century pieces or even late 19th-century pieces, you're going to have to look further than your own garage.

Perchance you have an assortment of old family heirlooms that includes a silver tea set, or even just a silver tray. This can be a wonderful base for a vintage Christmas decoration, even though it might not look appear to be, at this moment. You can make this serving dish into a centerpiece by putting a thin wreath on it and working candles into the wreath.



Perhaps you have old crystal bowls - these can become elegant appetizer bowls or can also be made into a centerpiece with candles and Christmas greenery. Candlelight makes cut crystal glitter like snowflakes - a truly celebratory way to create a vintage Christmas decoration.

No matter what you do, peek around for things that are adaptable. Crystal and silver are your best bets - they can generate a holiday sense with candlelight and a few red accents and greenery.

There's no need to purchase an entire setting of Christmas china - ivory or white porcelain with a red napkin in a gleaming crystal napkin ring will create the same Christmas ambience, but in an elegantly vintage way.

Overall, it is quite trouble-free to see that there are many singular benefits that can be attained from using a vintage Christmas decoration, and so if you do turn out to have a vintage Christmas decoration, then you should ensure that you bring it out for Christmas!

Figure 28 - Christmas Postcard Teddy Bear Dolls Dog on Sleigh. International Art Publ. Co.



Alternative Gift Ideas Instead of Toys

Many parents and other relatives are considering alternative gift ideas for the 2007 holidays because of the recent mass toy recalls suffered this fall. Many families are looking at the possibility that they may be offered a chance to look “outside the box” at the whole gift-giving scene. There are many good alternative gift ideas that they can look at. Here are listed some great kid-friendly choices for alternatives you may explore.

One kid pleaser is the idea that they can receive a gift certificate to someplace fun, like camp or ice-skating lessons paid for by a favorite aunt or uncle.

The Gift of Time

Sometimes the best gift of all is the gift of time. Make a thoughtful collection of items that represent activities that you and your child can do together during the next year and wrap these items up and tell your child that this year they are going to receive a gift of time; time spent with their mom or dad. An example would be that a small child's baseball would represent one baseball outing with dad, a package of marshmallows would represent the opportunity for a whole weekend camping at a favorite campsite, and a peanut would represent one afternoon spent at the circus as a family. Make sure you follow-up and actually do these activities with your child.

Make A Coupon Book That Contains Fun Family Activities.

- 🐻 Each coupon would be one activity.
- 🐻 One might be for a family taffy pull
- 🐻 Another may be a night of camping out in the family living room on sleeping bags where you all tell ghost stories and play games, eat snacks and tell jokes.
- 🐻 Another coupon could be for baking chocolate chip cookies together.
- 🐻 A coupon for visiting a nursing home in the area and singing Christmas carols.





Think of activities that the kids would like, for example

- ▶ Hiking on a local wildlife trail
- ▶ Going to the zoo
- ▶ Making and flying a kite
- ▶ Visiting a chocolate factory



You can create and print the coupons on your computer.

Consider making a craft together. You can purchase all of the materials and print or copy the instructions for the craft or hobby project and put everything into a box, wrapped in their favorite colored paper. Tell them that this is something the two of you can do together.

Girls especially love learning how to sew, embroider, knit or crochet and how fun that they can do this with you! Think of something that you are good at (model airplanes, mosaic tiles, pottery, etc.) and make it a gift of time spent together, creating something fun together.

Figure 29 – Andy's hands... Gingerbread! A paper ornament, or a real cookie Dough Boy! All are fun for kids and YOU!



Buy or make one of those cookies in a jar items and wrap the jar up as a present. Make sure that the treat is the child's favorite. Toss in some envelopes of hot cocoa and a bag of marshmallows and you have a terrific gift!



More Alternative Gift Ideas

- 🐾 Books centered on the child's favorite subject
- 🐾 Accessories for your child's favorite sport
- 🐾 Costumes for dress up/playtime for the little kids (can be purchased cheaply right after Halloween)
- 🐾 A large box filled with craft odds and ends including: assorted ribbons, bows, pipe cleaners, buttons, pom-poms, stickers, fabric swatches, shiny paper, construction paper, tissue paper, etc.
- 🐾 Give the gift of music in the form of an instrument, tickets to a concert, CDs, or a book about Jazz or the Blues, etc.
- 🐾 Science experiment kits or a book about science experiments

These alternative gift ideas are great to give for any gift giving occasion - birthday, thank you, and holiday or whenever you want to brighten a child's day. Have fun thinking "outside the box" when it comes to gift giving.

Figure 30 – A great gift! A large box filled with craft odds and ends... or a more expensive box of pastel colors for your budding artist?!



Santa Claus

Figure 31 - Lovely vintage postcard featuring a handsome Santa wearing a long red robe with fur trim, a hat, gloves and a pair of goggles for driving. This German made litho is circa 1910.



A Man By The Name Of St. Nicholas

The tradition of Santa Claus goes back centuries and is one of the reasons why we give gifts today... Even though no mention of this was made previously. That's because the tradition of Santa Claus is a story that deserves a section all by itself.

Santa Claus, as we know and love him today didn't start out that way. It all began in the 4th century A.D. With a man by the name of St. Nicholas.

Endearing Acts Of Generosity

What bridges the gap between modern day Santa Claus and the legend of St. Nicholas was his endearing acts of generosity.

It is said that in one particular act of kindness and generosity St. Nicholas save the lives of three sisters. The story goes that three sisters were to be sold by their father into slavery, or prostitution, because he was a poor, but God fearing man,



and had no dowries to bestow upon his daughters to save them from this terrible future. St. Nicholas heard of this man, and so one night, St. Nicholas ventured off to his home.

Figure 32 – Vintage postcard. Santa is outside listening to the mother play piano while the little girl sings. Circa 1911.



Peering in the window, St. Nicholas saw the three sisters fast asleep in their bed. He noticed that they had just finished washing up their stockings and hung them to dry by the window and the fireplace.

As the story goes, St. Nicholas then took many gold pieces from his pockets and began throwing them through the window and down the chimney.



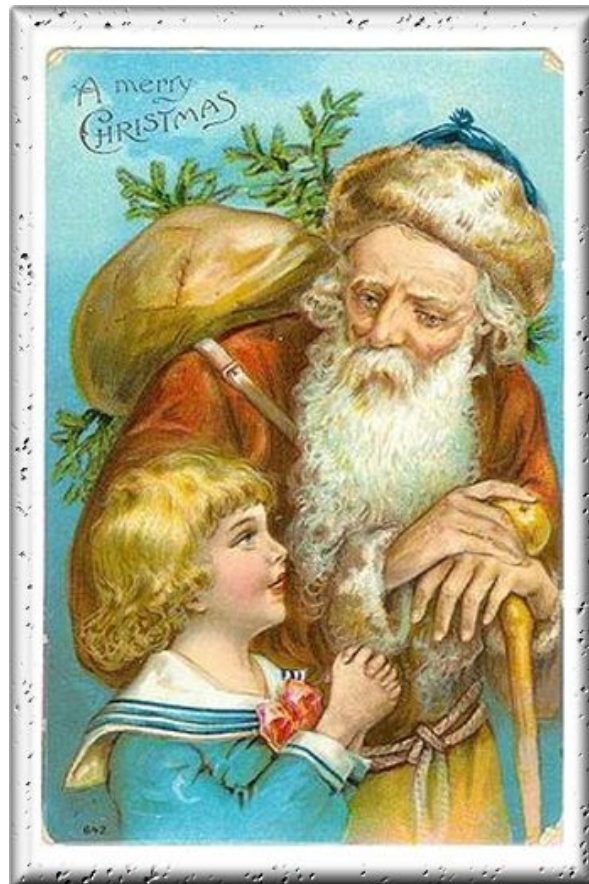
Shimmering Gold Pieces That Saved Their Lives

Amazingly enough, the gold pieces fell into the sister's stockings, and when they awoke in the morning, they found their stockings filled with shimmering gold pieces that saved their lives from a destitute future.

That's just one act of charity St. Nicholas performed. And it is the most well known and retold account. He performed many other everyday "miracles" rescuing the poor from the fates that awaited them.

His Legend Spread Throughout Europe Like Wildfire

Figure 33 - Santa in a brown suit, carrying a sack while leaning on a cane. He is listening to a little girl dressed in a blue dress. She seems to be hoping or praying for something specific. It's a charming European postcard ... beautiful for its age and detail. Era: 1907 – 1915.



His legend spread throughout Europe like wildfire, and hopeful children would leave their stockings hung beside the chimney. And in some cultures, their



wooden shoes sitting on the hearth. They would awake in the mornings to find all sorts of presents and goodies filled their empty stockings, or shoes.

[He Was An Ordinary Man With An Extraordinary Heart](#)

What is of important significance about Nicholas was at the time he was performing these acts of kindness, he was not a Saint. He was an ordinary man with an extraordinary heart. He cared for his fellow man and was a devout follower of Christianity modeling his life around it. Because of his good deeds and acts of charity to the less fortunate, he ascended to Sainthood.

Figure 34 - Christmas Postcard "Santa and Children" – circa 1910



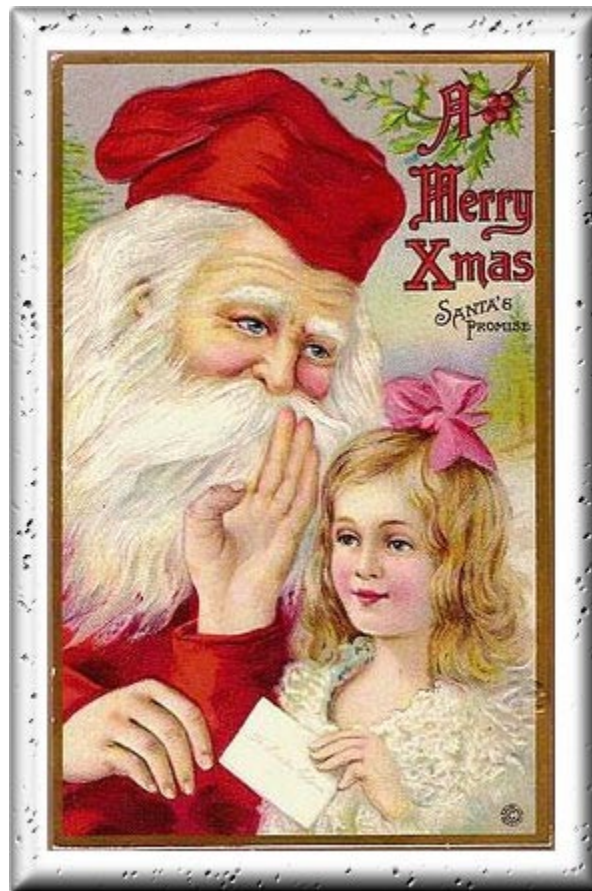
Enter... Father Christmas - A Somewhat Portly Fellow

But, the then St. Nicholas looked nothing like the Santa Claus we are familiar with in today's American society however.

He Wasn't Exactly Our Vision Of Santa Claus, But It's Pretty Darn Close

This new vision of Santa came long after, but his character was based on the legendary St. Nicholas. And what a wonderful person to base a figure loved by children the world over after!

Figure 35 - Gorgeous vintage postcard featuring Santa in Red and a pretty girl. Circa 1910-20.



Around the 17th century in Britain, there was a notoriously jolly man that delivered gifts to children across the country on Christmas Eve, lovingly referred to as Father Christmas. He wasn't exactly our vision of Santa Claus, but it's pretty darn close.



Father Christmas was a somewhat portly fellow, had a white beard, an older gentleman with a cheerful face, and dressed in a green robe trimmed in white fur that carried a staff. Basically, he looked like an older Christian fellow. Or maybe “Gandalf” from the Lord of the Rings? Yeah. You get the picture.

If you watch the classic Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol”, and spy the “Ghost of Christmas Past”, well that is similar to what Father Christmas looked like. With the white beard and hair of course ;-).

But, How Did Santa Get His Name?

Chalk that one up to the Dutch. People from the Netherlands also had created their own version of Santa. But to them, he was called by the name “Sinterklaas.” Sounds a lot like “Santa Claus”, right?

Wonder Where All Santa’s Little Helpers Came From?

It doesn’t end there though. Wonder where all Santa’s little helpers came from? Yep, I’m speaking about the elves. Well, those were a contribution of the Dutch too!

St. Nicholas Set Free A Little Ethiopian Boy Named “Piter”

The story goes that St. Nicholas set free a little Ethiopian boy named “Piter” from a Myra marketplace where he was to serve indefinitely throughout his life. Because of this, Piter decided to devote his life to his savior, St. Nicholas, and help him out with his work.

Later on, the one “helper” became many. And so we have Santa’s helpers, the elves, helping Santa get ready for the biggest night of the year, Christmas Eve.

On an interesting side note, “Piter” was given this name to represent another saint that went by the name of Peter. You may have heard of him ;-).



How Did He Go From The Look Of Father Christmas, To Jolly Old Saint Nick?

So, we know where Santa came from, and how he got his name, but how did he go from the look of Father Christmas, to jolly old Saint Nick?

That one's easy.

"The Night Before Christmas."

On December 23, 1823, the Troy, New York local newspaper called the "Sentinel" released a moving Christmas poem entitled "A Visit From St. Nicholas." But, we know it today as "The Night Before Christmas."

Eight Reindeer And Rudolf Was An Afterthought!!

As we all know, from our own childhood's, Santa is portrayed as a portly old fellow with a red nose, white beard, and fur trimmed outfit. We also know from the poem that Santa is equipped to do his nightly rounds with a sleigh and eight tiny reindeer. What, not nine of the little guys?

Nope. Rudolph wasn't thought up until a little bit later.

1885, Harper's Weekly And Voila! Santa As We Know Him, Came To Be!

Santa began donning the red outfit sometime later in 1863 when an American cartoonist by the name of Thomas Nast that appeared in "Harper's Weekly." Since then, Santa has been, for the most part, looking the same. Later on, in about 1885, Santa made his first appearance on a Christmas greeting card wearing his traditional red clothes and looking mainly as he does, still, to this very day.



The Christmas Card

No, Hallmark Didn't Start This.

It was an English man by the name of Sir Henry Cole in 1843. You see, Sir Henry needed a way to send out Christmas cards to family and friends to help the not so fortunate souls. And writing each one out by hand would be a tedious and timely task. Try saying that 3 times fast!

John Calcott Horsley And A Hand Painted Card

So, he hired a guy by the name of John Calcott Horsley to pick up the process. John set off to work and began hand painting an image onto a card that depicted the act of celebrating a joyous Christmas with family.

Under the picture read a caption that said, "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You." While the idea wasn't one that inspired Sir Henry's friends and family to join in on his crusade, and he didn't send any more cards out the following year, the idea of sending holiday wishes and greetings did.

Kate Greenaway And Victorian Illustrated Cards... From England!

Kate Greenaway, a prominent Victorian children's book writer and illustrator, assisted with the help of Frances Brundage and Ellen Clapsaddle, designed the first popular Christmas cards during the late 1800s into the early 1900s.

Still, 30 years or so after this, Americans that wanted Christmas cards to send off, had to import them directly from England. So England is responsible for the creation and tradition of the Christmas card.

German Louis Prang - Some Of The Most Beautiful Designs Ever Spied With The Human Eye

Until in 1875, a German immigrant by the name of Louis Prang started his very own lithography shop within the United States. At first, Louis didn't create traditional looking Christmas cards that we're familiar with today. As more people



requested wintery scenes and Christmas tidings, Louis came up with some of the most beautiful designs ever spied with the human eye.

**By The Time It Was 1881, Louis Was Creating
Better Than 5 Million Christmas Cards Every Year!**

Can you say millionaire?

Today, we can find all sorts of different Christmas cards sporting every Christmas greeting imaginable in shops all across the U.S.



Conclusion

Christmas Is A Joyous Occasion

While not many of the traditions we celebrate as a part of our American Christmas began in our country, they were meaningful to the cultures that created them. And, they are just as meaningful to us today. Even if the meaning is somewhat different.

One thing is abundantly clear, Christmas is a joyous occasion that we spend with family and friends to not only celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, but to enjoy one another's company, if only for one day out of the year.


















It is my sincerest hope that you have enjoyed reading about where our American Christmas traditions originated from and that you remember even though we may come from different places across the globe, we are all connected as brothers and sisters.

Figure 36 - Scarce vintage Wunsch postcard featuring two puppies on a sled with another pup chasing them. Circa 1910.



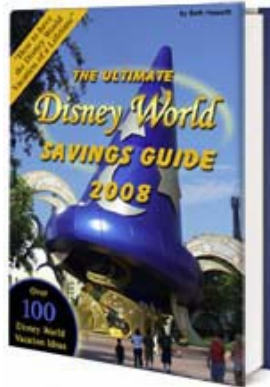
Resources For More Info

For more in depth information about the History of the American Christmas and Its Traditions, please feel free to use the following links to further your research on this subject.

-  [The History of Christmas From The History Channel](#)
-  [Christmas On The Net](#)
-  [All About Christmas](#)
-  [History of Christmas From Wikipedia](#)
-  [A Christmas History](#)
-  [Christmas History](#)
-  [The Christmas Archives](#)
-  [Christmas History and its Symbols](#)
-  [The History of Christmas](#)
-  [BenBest's History of Christmas](#)
-  [Christmas Crafts for Kids - Enchanted Learning Software](#)
-  [Christmas Craft Projects - Activity Ideas](#)
-  [DLTK's Christmas Crafts for Kids](#)
-  [Christmas Crafts \(Christmas Stockings, Garland & Candy\) - and More ...](#)
-  [Christmas Crafts Countdown: Decorations, Ornaments, & Handmade ...](#)
-  [Christmas Crafts: Wonderful Projects for the Entire Family](#)
-  [Christmas and Winter Crafts](#)
-  [Christmas on the Net - Christmas Goodies](#)
-  [Christmas Crafts - Free Christmas Printables](#)
-  [Victorian Christmas Crafts](#)
-  [Country Crafts Christmas](#)



Go Disney!



Ultimate Disney World Savings Guide Ebook - 2008

Please note that this is an Ebook that is updated regularly. All customers receive lifetime access to Ebook updates, even if it's months or years after your initial purchase. You will always have the very latest Disney savings strategies at your fingertips. This incredible Ebook is chock full of real savings, and even more important, it's right up to date including current discounts and codes on Disney room offerings. A broad base of information that will save you a TON of money, from your lodging costs to all the park offerings. Make DISNEY WORLD your 2008 GetAway!

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Wishing You A Happy & Healthy Holiday.

Wherever and whenever you are going...

We wish you the Successful Homemade Christmas of Your Life!

Leanne



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