

# The History of the American Christmas And Its Traditions

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## Brief Introduction

The Christmas Tree. Hanging Stockings. Christmas Cards. Carolling. Santa Claus. Gift Giving. Egg Nog. The Yule Log.

Do you know where these traditions came from? Are you someone that believes they've simply "always existed" and is something we, as a Nation

have always done every year around December 24th? Or do you believe that we simply "created" them ourselves?

If you are, then you really don't know the history of Christmas traditions. Have you ever wondered why we do the things we do when the snow begins to fall and the air becomes oh so chilly?

There is a reason we perform every single Christmas tradition we know today. And some of them may not be why you think!

Throughout these pages, you will discover why certain Christmas traditions are performed every year, and where exactly in the world they came from. Here's a secret you may not know. . . .Many of the Christmas traditions we use to celebrate our National Holiday didn't even originate in our country! Hard to believe? Well, it's 100%, without a doubt F-A-C-T.

Guess what else? Christmas almost didn't exist in our country! What????!

Yep, it's true. In fact, some of the earliest "Powers That Be" did not believe in the Holiday because of it's origins.

Now you might be thinking, "How Can That Be?? Surely That Isn't The Case At All. Someone Must Be Misinformed About This Sacred Holiday!".

I can assure you that someone IS misinformed about this holiday. And, it could be you. Or someone you know that doesn't understand the true history behind Christmas and the traditions that surround our most sacred of holidays.

Wouldn't you like to know exactly where it all began and how we celebrate the Christmas holiday today is a result of our past?

Well, you're going to read about the whole thing. Right here and now within these very pages. So sit back, grab a cup of your favorite Holiday beverage, and prepare yourself to discover The History of The American Christmas and its Traditions!

To A Happy Holiday Season,

## Christmas: Where It All Began

**Christmas.** The word itself inspires feelings of joy and good will towards our fellow man. A day when the greatest gift in all the world was bestowed upon us from Heaven.

When you think of the name "Christmas", what immediately comes to your mind? The birth of Jesus Christ? Yes, traditionally, that is what we believe is the reason behind the Christmas holiday and celebration. The birth of Jesus Christ. I mean, goodness sake! His name is in the word itself!

But is that really where the beginning of the Christmas holiday comes from? Or is it somewhere else? Would you believe that it is indeed rooted somewhere else?!

Let's go back though, to the time before Jesus Christ's birth, and see if we can't make sense of this. . . .

Centuries before Christ was born there was a group of people who celebrated something they called "The Winter Solstice". In this celebration, early Europeans would gather together and rejoice that the worst part of the Winter Season was passing and that they had managed to survive another harsh, cold Winter. And also, that they could begin enjoying longer days. In other words, this was a celebration of light itself. And life as well.

This celebration of light and survival would take place around December 21st or the 22nd every year. And, depending on the calendar shift, it could occur anywhere between December 20th to the 23rd. Pretty close to the time when we traditionally celebrate our Christmas holiday, wouldn't you agree?

Indeed, all across the European countryside, the end of December was an ideal

time to have a celebration due in most part because cattle were slaughtered so that they would not have to be fed throughout Winter. And for lots of people, this would be one of the only times throughout the entire year that they would have access to fresh meat.

Not only this, but most beverages consumed, such as beer and wine, cultivated throughout the year had finished the fermentation cycle and were ready to be consumed. Beer and burgers? Now if that ain't a party, I don't know what is! ;-)

One last thing to mention is that in Germany, during this time, many people would pay tribute to the pagan god Oden. Now, long ago, many Germans who believed in this god were extremely afraid of him. The reason for this is because they believed that Oden would make "nightly rounds" to check up on his people, deciding who would thrive and who would, well, not. Due to this, many German people would stay indoors with their families.

To be truthful, many different cultures celebrated this time of year. Not just Winter Solstice and praising Oden. Romans later celebrated Saturnalia, the god of agriculture. Guess what his birthday was? **December 25th.**

As you can see, there are lots of similarities in the way in which we celebrate Christmas. Small, yes, but similar nonetheless.

So, even before Jesus Christ was born, we have groups of people in entire countries celebrating around a specific time frame during the winter months.

Now let's discuss the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is believed by many through the words of the Holy Bible that Jesus Christ was born on or around December 25th. This would be his "Birthday".

But, was it truly his Birthday?

In reality, no one has this finite answer. We can only assume that what we are reading is the truth, handed down from God Himself to us. There are no "official" birth and death records for Jesus' time period we can go back and look at to see exactly when He was born.

However, there is some evidence to suggest that maybe His birth actually occurred earlier in the year than during Winter.

If you take a look at the Biblical evidence, it says that there were shepherds in the fields during the time Jesus was being delivered.

But, if that were true, then He would not have been born during December as shepherds would not be herding their sheep in the middle of winter, would they? Maybe they would and maybe they wouldn't. We don't know this for sure. What we do know is this. . . .

Jesus' actual birth date is not mentioned throughout the pages of the Bible. In contrast, His death is. Which is why we celebrate Easter.

In fact, in the earlier days of Christianity, Easter was the main holiday celebrated with relation to Jesus Christ. His birthday wasn't even celebrated at all!

Only in the 4th century did Church officials declare Jesus Christ's birthday to become a celebrated holiday event.

But, if no one knew what Jesus' actual birth date was, why would Pope Julius I have selected December 25th for it to be celebrated on?

Some historians believe this was done to try and dissolve the Saturnalia festival in early Roman times along with other pagan worship festivals that were frowned upon by the Church occurring around this time.

Why were these celebrations "frowned" upon? Let's take Saturnalia for example.

During this celebration, which lasted an entire week, Roman people would participate in all sorts of activities that included drinking and eating as much as they wanted, and basically doing as they pleased without recourse from any laws or authorities to themselves or others.

At the start of the festival, the Roman authoritative buildings would be shut down and Roman officials would select someone to represent the "Lord of

"Misrule". More often than not, this would be someone deemed as "an enemy of the Roman people", or a criminal for lack of a better term. In addition, each Roman community would do likewise within their individual communities.

The persons selected by their communities would then enjoy a week long binge of drinking, sex, and any indulgence they pleased. At the end of the week, the person selected as the "Lord of Misrule" would be executed as a way of combating "dark forces".

It's pretty easy to see why the Church would want to do away with this type of celebration.

The Christmas celebration envisioned by the Church, or the celebration of Jesus Christ's birth, was appealing to many in it's earliest form. Simply because it allowed different cultures to continue their celebrations on as they normally did, but to celebrate them at a specific designated time. December 25th.

In the following years, the Christmas celebration gained in popularity so much so that it had extended all the way to places such as England by the end of the sixth century and Scandinavia by the end of the eighth. Now Christmas, or a form of it, is celebrated worldwide.

Of course some cultures still reserve "Christmas" as a holiday season to celebrate the power of "light". But, what is Jesus but God's Holy "Light"?

In all cultures, in some form or other, the Christmas holiday is one of joyous celebration of life and goodness, which can also be seen as a celebration of "light". Even if the celebration isn't called "Christmas", the concepts are still rooted in the same historical religious ideas.

However, some Christians, like the Puritans, didn't even want to observe Jesus Christ's birthday as a holiday. Nor would they allow their followers to either.

The reason? Firstly because they did not believe that December 25th was in fact the birth date of their Saviour, Jesus Christ. And, that the only reason this date was chosen to represent His birth, and to create a worldwide celebration was to conform all pagan religions over to Christianity. Therefore it was not a date that the Puritans wanted to celebrate.

In fact, by some early Puritan American colonists, the celebration of Christmas was completely banned in Boston roughly between the years 1659 and 1681. And, if you were caught in the act of celebrating such a pagan originated holiday, you would be fined for doing so.

Although, there were other colonies that did take part in Christmas celebrations throughout early America and went against the grain, as it were. And so it is that the Christmas we celebrate has survived throughout the long years.

But, how do we go from celebrating Jesus Christ's birthday to stockings, Christmas trees, drinking egg nog, receiving gifts and all the commercialization elements of the holiday as we celebrate it today?

Well, the "gifts" part is understandable, to a point. Jesus was our "gift" from God. Or, if you believe differently, our life is a "gift" from an ultimate source of power. But how does this correlate with getting an iPod?

In the next chapters, we'll find out what exactly a "Christmas tradition" is, and where many of our Christmas traditions come from.

## What Is A Christmas Tradition?

In it's 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.

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 decides 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.



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 relatives 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.

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's how doing them makes us feel inside, and outside really.

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 par-take in every year.

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

## Where Did American Christmas Traditions Come From?

In order to fully understand why, as American's, 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 chapter 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. 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

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

But, did the tradition begin in America?

Certainly not!

It actually began in Germany. In about the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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. 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 1960's.

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

## **The Yule Log**

The Yule Log, as we have come to know it, is a rather large piece of wood, cylindrical in shape, that is placed inside the fireplace and burned on Christmas Eve.

Or, you may know it simply as a little cake that resembles a wooden log!

Either way, they both originated from the same place. Northern Europe. While different regions would make use of the Yule Log in various ways, it was always used as part of Christmas Eve festivities.

More often than not, the Yule Log was bought inside, lit in the hearth, and kept burning from 12 hours to 12 days. Which could be where the 12 days of Christmas idea came from.

During the Yule burning ritual, it was believed that a household would enjoy good luck in one form or another to every member of the home that the warmth of the fire from the Yule Log touched. Normally this mean a life full of health, wealth, and happiness.

It was also considered a tribute to Odin, the Norse god of war, wisdom, and death. And, in Scandinavian culture, the name of Odin was actually Jolnir. It is interesting to note that the first three letters in the aforementioned name was also the name of a popular Solstice festival and when pronounced it sounds like “Yule”.

This tradition finally made its way to England, where the gathering of the Yule Log was an entire family involved event. Family members would venture out into the forest, select a huge tree, chop it down, make one great log from a portion of it, and drag it with ropes back to their home. The log had to be big enough to keep ablaze for 12 days.

It was widely believed that if you participated in the dragging, you would have good luck throughout the following year.

After the log had finished it's burning cycle, a small bit of it was saved back for lighting next year's Yule Log. Indeed, some of the ashes from the Yule Log were scattered throughout home owner's fields to ensure a healthy crop the following year.

This tradition made its way over to America from our English forefathers when arriving to our country and has been part of our Christmas traditions ever since.

## Christmas Caroling

The actual invention of Christmas caroling is not clear. Some claim that carols, derived from the French word carole, meaning “kind of dance”, began as far back as the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Others report that carols, as we know them today, originated between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries with St. Francis of Assisi, a Roman Catholic saint leading the way.

Because the act of caroling is an unwritten tradition, it makes the task of

origination all the more difficult.

As the term “carole” or “carol” implies, in the beginning, there were no Christian ties involved whatsoever. When one would “carol” in early times, they would be performing a traditional cultural dance often times accompanied by some sort of music. In the French translation of the word, it is accompanied with song. In the early stages, there was no singing associated.

What is known is that St Francis of Assisi ushered in a more well known form of caroling by combining singing Christian songs, or hymns, with Christmas church services. But where did these hymns come from? It is believed that they were written around the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. praising the birth of Jesus Christ.

But why do Christmas carolers travel in groups going from house to house singing and celebrating the season today?

It is believed that this portion of Christmas caroling developed in or around the 16<sup>th</sup> century with those too poor “singing for their supper”, going from door-to-door until they received enough food and drink to sustain them for the night.

The Christmas carol as we know it today wasn't widely accepted in America until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was concurrently made popular in England during the Victorian era.

## 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.

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 bring forth are that of wonder, happiness, and surprise.

## The Candy Cane

Would you believe that the Candy Cane as we are familiar with it today, was actually invented as a tool to keep children quiet?!

It's true.

Back in the 1670's, a choirmaster at the Cologne Cathedral in Germany, took a well known candy, a "sugar stick" and bent one end to resemble that of a Shepherd's staff during the long church Christmas ceremonies. This new idea quickly spread over to America and churches then began performing the same tradition within their midst.

Candy Canes, in their infancy, were mostly reserved for Christmas themed religious ceremonies. But, there was one documented case of someone decorating their own Christmas Tree with the traditional "white" candies.

A man by the name of August Imgard, a German immigrant, displayed candy canes on his family Christmas tree in Wooster, Ohio, in the year 1847.

At first, the Candy Canes were all white, void of any other color. Until in the 1920's, a man by the name of Bob McCormack began making the Candy Cane as we know it today, with the red stripes included, for his family, neighbors, and friends. Bob did this process, every year all by hand.

That all changed when his brother in law, a Catholic priest by the name of Gregory Keller, invented a machine that automated the Candy Cane creation

process in about 1950.

Now, we all enjoy Candy Canes, from the traditional red and white striped peppermint candies, down to the multi colored fruity flavored ones.

## Santa Claus

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 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. With a man by the name of St. Nicholas.

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.

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.

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, 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.

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.

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

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!

Around the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 is 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?

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!

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 give this name to represent another saint that went by the name of Peter. You may have heard of him ;-).

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.

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”.

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 9?

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

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!

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, 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 1800's into the early 1900's.

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.

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 wintry 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.

## The Poinsettia

You would think, after reading that most of our American holiday traditions stemmed from Europe, that it would only stand to reason that the tradition of placing Poinsettia flowers around our homes would also come from that region.

Well, if you thought that, you would be 100%. . . .Wrong!

Actually, this tradition came all the way from. . . Mexico!

That's right. Mexico is the correct answer.

Our American tradition of displaying Poinsettias around our homes was the brain child of none other than Joel Roberts Poinsett. I mean, check out the name! You knew it was coming :-).

If it were not for Joel R. Poinsett's love of botany, we may have never even known about this beautiful and festive flower at all. In 1825, Joel Roberts Poinsett was appointed to the prestigious title of the United States Ambassador to Mexico.

On one of his journeys to Mexico, he discovered the vibrantly red flower. He immediately fell in love with it as a practicing botanist, and shipped some of them back to his home in Greenville, South Carolina.

After a short time of cultivating the flowers inside his hothouses, he began sending them to his friends and family as a Christmas gift.

Now, we display them within our own homes. And can purchase them from any greenhouse or corner shop.

## Conclusion

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.

Wishing You A Happy & Healthy Holiday,

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[Christmas On The Net](#)

[All About Christmas](#)

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