



A group of Norwegian Nisse

Before becoming a gift-giver, the *julebuk* was known for scaring children and demanding gifts for himself. In fact many early versions of Santa Claus were not benevolent bearers of gifts but punishers of ill-behaved children. Santa's sack originally held not gifts but naughty children.

The name Santa Claus itself is thought to come from the Dutch *Sinter Klaas*, which was a colloquialism for St. Nicholas. *Sinter Klaas* was often depicted with a long beard, hat and pipe. His costume was often green and sometimes even purple. The tradition of giving gifts to children in honor of St. Nick came to the U.S. with early Dutch settlers, in the late 1700s. *Sinter Klaas* became St. A. Claus in a 1773 newspaper story, according to The-North-Pole.com

The name Kris Kringle comes from an Americanization of the German *Christkindl* or Christ child. The idea of the *Christkindl* was introduced by the Protestant reformer Martin Luther, who wanted to get away from the Catholic saint associations of St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas appears in Washington Irving's 1809 *A History of New York* (Please note: Irving is also the guy responsible for the Headless Horseman). It was Irving who described him in a wagon flying above the trees and "laying his finger beside his nose."

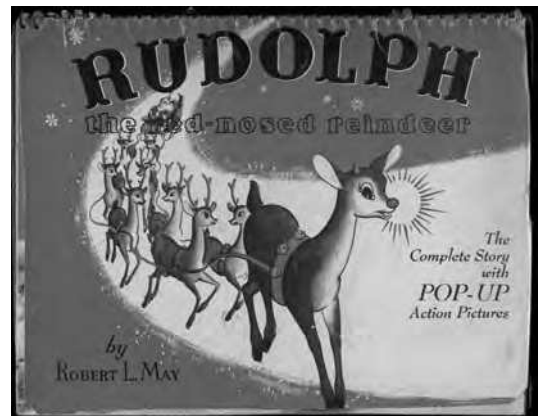
By the time either Clement Clarke Moore or Henry Livingston Jr. — there's some dispute as to the authorship — anonymously published "'Twas the Night Before Christmas," aka "A Visit from St. Nicholas," in a New York newspaper in 1823, the image of Santa as a jolly pudgy man in a red suit had already made its way into public folklore. The poem just cemented his features.

boys and girls in Scandinavia, and this soon became blended with other Santa traditions. Scandinavian children were probably grateful for the *julenisse* because before the 1800s, it was a *julebuk* or Christmas goat that brought presents. Rather than dress up like Santa Claus, nineteenth century Scandinavian men got to dress up as goats.

*He sees you when you're sleeping,
He knows when you're awake;
He knows if you've been bad or good,
So be good, for goodness' sake!
Oh, you better watch out, you better not cry,
Better not pout, I'm telling you why:
Santa Claus is comin' to town.*
— "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town," Haven Gillespie

Santa's move to the North Pole was probably a creation of artist Thomas Nast, according to an article on a *Harper's Weekly* history website (www.HarpWeek.com). Nast illustrated Santa for *Harper's Weekly* in the 1860s. Having Santa living in the Arctic may have come from the interest at that time in Arctic exploration and also because the Pole was not possessed by any one nation (though nations are fighting over it now). Nast also reinforced the whole "naughty or nice" idea. He was a German immigrant and probably familiar with the scary German *Belznickel* or "furry Nicholas," who left bad children ashes, along with other Germanic Santa figures who were just as apt to whip children as they were to give them presents.

The jolly red Santa image was reinforced further in 1931 in a series of advertisements for Coca-Cola. Coke is sometimes credited for creating the Santa we know today, but the advertisements reflected what was already appearing on Christmas cards and in folklore. Coke removed Santa's pipe, replaced it with a bottle of soda and used him to persuade people that Coke could be drunk in cold as well as warm weather with the slogan, "Thirst knows no season."



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