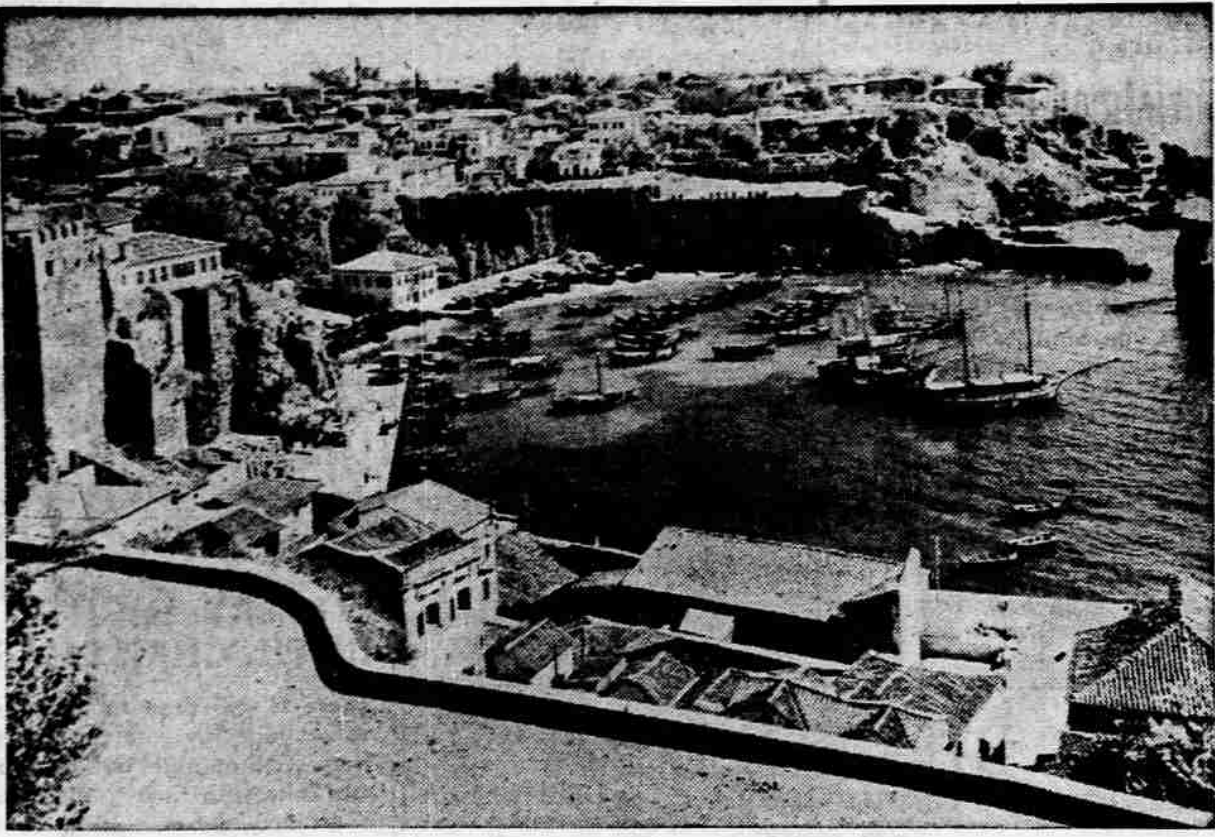




SANTA'S HOMELAND—Shown above is a coastal village in Turkey in the province where St. Nicholas was born and raised some 1,600 years ago. The good saint, patron of sailors, thieves and maiden ladies, was the

"real life" person about whom traditions and legends grew into the American "Santa Claus." His homeland, and some of the background of "the Christmas saint" are described in the accompanying article.

Turkish Saint Said Basis for Tradition Of American 'Santa'

Demre, Turkey—A few years ago, some globe-trotting Americans were swimming under a hot sun here on Christmas day. Despite its great beauty, no setting, it seemed to them, could have been less appropriate for Santa Claus than the sandy and sunny shores of the Mediterranean along Turkey's southern coast.

After hearing the Americans' comments, a Turkish friend smilingly bundled them into a car and drove a few miles inland. Much to their surprise, they found themselves wandering through the countryside where "Santa Claus" was born, lived out his life and where he became a legend. St. Nicholas was what he was called in those days.

Reputation for Generosity

Perhaps the proverbial good nature of St. Nicholas is not so surprising considering the legend that he was born into some 1,600 years ago. It was here that his reputation for generosity got its start. A tale tells of how he endowed three worthy but poor unmarried girls with the dowries that enabled them to find husbands.

This act seems to have made a strong impression on our ancestors, as he is often depicted in old pictures holding three gold balls. These symbolize the bags of gold he tossed into the window of the impoverished father of the spinsters. He thus became the patron saint of unmarried, and virtuous, ladies. This is all the more remarkable in view of his popularity with sailors.

Respected by Sailors

No doubt, the sailors were less attracted to him for his high moral purposes than for his readiness to intercede for those in trouble on the high seas. Oddly enough, even the pirates respected him as their patron saint, though they expressed their respect in a curious way. In the year 1087, the Church of St. Nicholas at Myra where the good man was once bishop, was broken into by pirates who carried back to their home-port most of the Saint's remains, which were buried in a sarcophagus in the Church.

Churches Given Name

His popularity was so great in the Middle Ages that hundreds of churches were named in his honor. More than that, his fame had penetrated secular circles, as well. Pawnbrokers

took the three gold balls as a symbol, and made Nicholas their patron saint, realizing that dignity would accrue to their profession if they could associate their activities with his name.

The days of St. Nicholas were not always happy ones. He lived at a time when the goddess Diana was the object of worship throughout the Mediterranean area. The Roman Emperor Diocletian, a devotee of the goddess, seeking to extirpate Christianity, then only three centuries old, imprisoned the already well-known Bishop of Myra. The persecution only served to increase Nicholas' fame, and when Constantine came to the throne, the future saint was released with honors by the man who made Christianity the official religion of the Empire.

Popularity Grew

The years that followed Nicholas' death in the middle of the fourth century saw his popularity grow to immense proportions. He became the patron saint of Russia, and remained so until the downfall of the Tsar. Throughout Europe, his day was observed with merry festivities and gift-giving.

In some of the leading English schools, notably Salisbury, a boy bishop was elected each year and, gotten up in the likeness of St. Nicholas, presided over festivities that extended from Dec. 6 (St. Nicholas Day) to Dec. 28 (Innocents' or Childermas Day). It was thus that festivities for the Saint became part of the Christmas season.

Came to America
The festival of St. Nicholas became very popular in Holland. When the Dutch came to America and founded New Amsterdam, which later became New York, they brought the festival with them. As a matter of fact, an image of the Saint formed the figurehead on the prow of the first Dutch immigrant ship that touched Manhattan Island, and Nicholas was promptly accepted as the patron saint of the future metropolis.

The Dutch name for Saint Nicholas soon became "Santa Claus," which was easier to say, and it is under this name that he became widely known throughout the Colonies.

Country Described

The St. Nicholas country—Turkey's province of Antalya—is one of the most beautiful places in the world. Like its western Mediterranean counter-

Eastwood Church Christmas Events Scheduled Sunday

A series of three pre-Christmas sermons will be concluded Sunday at 11 a. m. at the Eastwood Baptist church, the Rev. Willis J. Loar announced.

The message, entitled "The Cradle and the Cross," will be supplemented with Christmas music.

At the pageant service Sunday at 7:30 p. m., a Christmas pageant "The Story the Angels Told," will be presented. The cast includes Phyllis Mitchell, Georgia Mitchell, Fern Johnson, John Johnson, Jr., William Fry, William Garner, John Yungen, Ronnie Adair, Mike Miller, Mac Simmons.

Lynn Campbell, Gary Johnson, Carol Anderson, Larry Tuttle, Nathan Parrish, Jeri Parrish, Willis J. Loar, Margaret Loar, Virginia Yungen, Peggy Garner, Virginia Fry, Joyce Matheus, Lola White, Dorothy Tuttle, Carolyn English, David Loar, Steve Parrish, Judi Parrish, Dean Anderson, Henry Anderson, Fern Johnson, Bette Parrish, Mrs. D. A. Harris, Don Matheus and Pearl Orr.

The public is invited. A treat will be given the Sunday school children after the pageant.

part, the French Riviera, it is remarkable for its variety. Mountains cut off the cold winds from the north, creating sub-tropical valley where bananas and oranges grow. Many streams teeming with fish, rise in the Taurus Mountains, and the hills themselves are alive not only with hares, geese and quail, but with bears and leopards as well.

Travelers are beginning to discover the almost forgotten little town of Myra, now called Demre. In recent years, the Turkish government has made strenuous efforts to safeguard what remains of the old Church of St. Nicholas, and has built a shell around it to protect it from the onslaughts of weather.

Old Saint Nicholas has happily captured the imagination of millions of people the world over. Whether he wears a red suit or a bishop's robe, whether he lives in the icy wastes of the North Pole or along the sunny shores of southern Turkey, this delightful saint is a colorful and remarkable propagator of cheer and good will as colorful and remarkable as the land he was born in some 1,600 years ago.

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