



# Nyssa Gate City Journal

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A Joyous  
Christmas  
TO ALL!

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## Yesteryear's Customs Live At Yuletide

Candles and carols, trees and treats, gifts and greens — and Santa Claus, of course. Wherever Christmas is celebrated, these symbols seem to appear.

In the modern era of rapid communication, there is a growing uniformity in the ways that people everywhere choose to mark the holiday.

Yesteryear's customs, however, still have their place in modern celebrations. It's a case of "the more things change, the more they stay the same," as countries, communities and individuals seek to cherish and preserve their own special holiday traditions.

Some of these traditions, as treasured in memory or kept alive in holiday ritual, are compiled in the following paragraphs, according to information from the editors of Encyclopedia International.

### It's a Mystery

Mysterious things happen on Christmas Eve, say country legends of Switzerland. Young people may foretell the future, if they drink from nine different fountains while the midnight church bells chime. Then, if they hasten to the church steps, their future mates will await them there.

Somewhat less romantically, older folk seek to predict the weather for the coming year, using onion peels filled with salt.

### How Many Holidays?

Traditionally, Belgians celebrate three holidays at the Christmas season — beginning with St. Nicholas Day, December 6th, when the good saint brings gifts for children.

Then comes St. Thomas Day, December 21st. It's a sort of "trick or treat" day for school children, who try to play tricks on their teachers.

The third holiday, of course, is Christmas.

### Wrapping Gifts

When German tradition is followed, unwrapping a Christmas gift can be an amusing but complicated process.

One gift may have many consecutive wrappings, each with a different name on it, and the final wrapping may reveal not a gift, but a card telling where the gift is hidden.

Other cards in other hiding places lead to a treasure hunt, ending in the discovery of the gift.

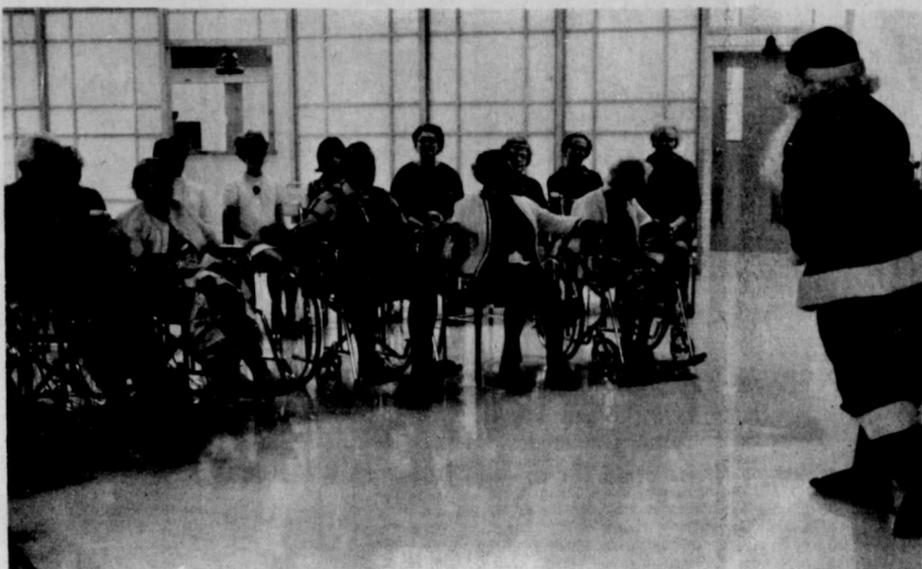
### Picturing Nativity

The Christmas crib or presepio is an especially treasured part of the Portuguese holiday celebration. Every home and church seems to have one, and some of those in the churches are masterpieces of art.

Especially famous is the presepio in Estrella Church, Lisbon. This Nativity scene depicts the people of Bethlehem, in terra cotta figures. Unique among the crowd are the figures of an elephant and a bagpiper.

### Baking Cakes

If the weather on St. Nicholas Day, December 6th, is



SANTA CLAUS VISITS RESIDENTS OF THE NURSING HOME at Malheur Memorial Hospital. The photos were snapped Monday afternoon, Dec. 23, 1968 in the recreation room of the new nursing home wing. In the top photo, Santa leads the group in singing Christmas songs, as the nursing home residents join hands. The elderly patients are those in the first row and are (l to r) John Shultz, Florence Story, Clarence Goodman, Anna West and Alice Peterson. Seated behind them are members of the hospital auxiliary and Job's Daughters of Bethel 33. They are Mrs. Eva Aspinwall, Kathy Nelson, Susan Kouns, Joyce Jennings, Mrs. Wilbur (Freda) Holcomb, Mrs. Joe (Jeanne) Maughan,

Mrs. Louise Heldt and Mrs. R. A. (Erma) Forbess. In the lower photo are more residents of the nursing home, with Santa Claus, pictured in front of a beautifully decorated Christmas tree, surrounded by packages. These elderly folks are Miss Mertrude King, Clyde Gilbert, Jesus Esquibel, Ann Mae Sisson, Nina Cagle and Denzaburo Kitamura. And then in this photo, is Santa, too. Who is Santa in this case. Well once again, as last year, her initials are E. L. and in addition to being president of the hospital auxiliary and playing the role of Santa, in real life she is Mrs. Ralph G. (Ethel) Lawrence. - Journal photos.

## Cities Put Up Evergreens

Comes Christmas, and cities everywhere renew the tradition of setting up a community Christmas tree — a custom which began early in this century.

In 1909, citizens of Pasadena, Calif., decorated an evergreen on Mount Wilson as the tree of the city.

The year 1912 saw community Christmas trees erected in Madison Square, New York, N. Y., and on the Common in Boston, Mass. Independence Square in Philadelphia, Pa., showed off its first community tree in 1914.

President Calvin Coolidge inaugurated the custom of a national community Christmas tree in Washington, D.C., when he was presented with a large evergreen by the University of Vermont, in 1923.

## Flowers Speak Language of Love In Modern or Victorian Era

Like holly, ivy and mistletoe, flowers share in the legend and lore of Christmas. In terms of the Victorian era, the floral legend is an especially meaningful one.

A Victorian lady who received a bouquet from her admirer could either smell it or read it as if it were a letter. Often, it was a letter.

Young engaged couples, strictly chaperoned, found a way to communicate words of affection via flowers. Each flower had a special meaning.

Flowers in sequence could be used to spell out a fervent pledge of love. To help in composing — and translating — these messages, there were numerous tiny dictionaries listing flowers and their meanings.

The flowering honeysuckle, for instance, spoke of "bonds of love." A red rosebud told a lady that she was "pure and lovely." Red double pink meant "woman's love." And heliotrope carried a bold message, "I love you."

This Victorian language of flowers greatly influenced the design of Christmas cards of the time — witness the card illustrated here, from the Norcross Historical Collection of antique cards.

The lush summer blooms are typical of the Victorian admiration of flowers, regardless of the season.

Though sentiments may be expressed differently, flowers still bloom on modern Christmas cards. A current card offers one example. Poinsettias flower on a background of mistletoe, and the message reads, "Just for you, honey, all my love at Christmas."

### For Feasting

Traditional Christmas treat in Spain is a sweet pastry called "dulces de almendra." The ingredients are sugar, flour, egg white and almonds.

## Carols Express Yule Joy, Echoing Across the Ages

Voices rise in songs of joy and praise. As the joyous season arrives, the vibrant sound of carolers is heard in churches, at family gatherings, in groups going from house to house to celebrate with song.

Carols are as much a part of the Yuletide as the tree, gifts and Santa himself.

It all began with the first carols in the 13th century, says the Encyclopedia Americana.

The earliest English carols were composed anonymously, perhaps by clergymen or court musicians. Simple tunes and strong rhythms were characteristic, and the musical form featured a refrain, to repeat before and after each stanza.

Words were written, generally, in the English vernacular or in "macaronic" form — a combination of English and Latin.

The first printed collection of carols appeared in 1521. It included the "Boar's Head Carol," still sung during Christmas dinner at Queen's College, Oxford, England.

Even then, however, the practice of passing on carols orally, from generation to generation, continued. Among these were carols in ballad form, such as "I Saw Three Ships" and "The Cherry Tree Carol."

Caroling fell into disrepute in the 17th century, and carol singing was forbidden by the English Puritans. Those who colonized America carried this disapproval with

## Community Greet Joyful Christmas

Throughout this community, the Christmas spirit finds expression, as once again, people are proving that this happiest of holidays is a time of tradition. A modern Christmas, just like a good old-fashioned Christmas, calls for gatherings of family and friends, with much merriment, fun and feasting. Gifts and Santa Claus express the mood of the season, especially for the youngsters. Trees and other decorations, music and song, light and laughter set the scene. As a Christian holy day, celebrated in church services and private devotions, Christmas glows with the spirit of good will, and "peace and good will" is the wish and prayer, for all mankind.

All of these traditions of Christmas are wrapped up in one. The true spirit of Christmas is most happily expressed in the exchange of greetings. "Have a Merry Christmas." That says it all — the heartfelt hope for good things for others, the good feeling that prevails, the happiness of the season rising above problems and crises, the wish to give and to share all the holiday joys and blessings.

As a special custom that symbolizes the spirit of Christmas, the exchange of greetings takes many forms. "Merry Christmas" is said person-to-person, with smiles of gladness, wherever friends and family meet. "Merry Christmas" is the message of millions of greeting cards which travel across the miles. And "Merry Christmas" is the theme of today's edition of this newspaper, in which businessmen of the community offer their special greetings and good wishes, their words of appreciation to patrons and friends.

## Santa's Moving To Take Lead As Gift-Giver

More and more, Santa becomes the favored gift-giver in countries around the world, replacing a host of legendary figures who were said to bring gifts at this same season of the year.

Gift-giving time, too, is now more likely to be Christmas Eve, although the traditional date in European countries once ranged from St. Nicholas Eve, December 5th, to Epiphany Eve, January 5th.

Among the many who set the trend for Santa Claus is the German gift-giver, Kris Kringle. The name is a variation of Christkind — not the Infant Jesus himself, but his messenger who came to earth at Christmastime.

Christkind was represented by a child dressed in white robes, with a crown and wings of gold.

In Japan, the traditional gift-giver is a native god, Hotelesho. Represented as a kindly old man with a pack on his back, he is much like visions of the traditional Santa.

He is said to have eyes in the back of his head, the better to see whether boys and girls have been naughty or nice.

In Yugoslavia, Grandfather Frost — "Dede Mraz" — replaces Santa Claus. The Yugoslavian trend is to combine Christmas and New Year holidays, and celebrate them together with Grandfather Frost Day.

### IT'S TOO COMMON

In most of the United States, the poinsettia is a prized Christmas flower. In Hawaii, however, it grows so profusely that it is considered too common for such an important holiday. Potted orchids, anthurium or the orange-and-blue flower called "bird of paradise" are Hawaiian holiday favorites.

### Sending Greetings

The custom of exchanging greetings at holiday time is older than Christmas. The custom of the Christmas greeting card, however, is a relatively new one.

Christmas cards originated about 125 years ago, in England. Despite this recent start, printed greetings quickly caught the public fancy and are today one of the most popular forms of Christmas holiday traditions.

### Decorating Trees

The gaily decorated tree so much a part of Christmas has its counterpart in trees adorned with colorful trinkets during the ancient feasts of the winter equinox.

This pagan custom of decorating evergreens became associated with Christmas observances, and legends link it to the birth of Jesus. One such story says that on the night of the Nativity, all the woodland trees burst into bloom and bore fruit.

### Singing Carols

With voices lifted in harmony for "Silent Night," "The First Noel" and other beloved songs, today's carolers carry on a Christmas custom that originated centuries ago.

In the fourth century A.D., St. Basil was praised with a musical poem in honor of the fight for Christianity over the Byzantine emperor Julian. Later in Greece, legends of St. Basil were set to music and sung at Christmas and the New Year.

St. Francis of Assisi led the villagers of Greccio in singing hymns of praise to the Christ Child when in the 13th century he created a manger scene in this Italian town.

### Tracing Santa

Santa's source, legend says, goes back to the fourth century, when St. Nicholas, a bishop of Asia Minor, was noted for his generosity and gift-giving.

In some countries, St. Nicholas still retains his role as gift-bearer. His day is, traditionally, December 6th, and European children await him on St. Nicholas Eve, December 5th.

A gray horse and a white donkey have each been credited with the honor of transporting him on his gift-giving journeys.

### Giving Gifts

Like greetings, gifts are synonymous with Christmas, as part of a custom that probably has its beginning in the Wise Men's presentation of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ Child.

Some researchers trace the gift-giving tradition to even earlier, pre-Christian times. During pagan holidays observed at about the same time as the modern Christmas, ancient Romans and Britons exchanged gifts in token of the season.

### Lighting the Way

Light and Christmas go together, for the deepest meaning of the holiday represents Christ, the Light of the world. From the bonfires and candles of yesteryear to the twinkling electric ornaments of today, light symbolizes Christmas.

According to Irish legend, a candle should always be placed in the window on Christmas Eve. Each Christmas, it was said, Christ wanders the earth in search of a welcome, and a candle should light the way.

### To Spread Learning

The coming of Christianity brought a continuing concern with religious subjects as the text for illuminated manuscripts. Monasteries of Egypt and Syria were early dedicated to the creation of art, the development of crafts, the spread of learning.

In the Western world, these aims gained impetus with the founding of the Benedictine monasteries in the sixth century A.D. Artists and craftsmen worked devotedly to preserve sacred texts through their hand-copied, hand-illustrated, elaborately-bound vellum manuscripts.

From time to time, secular texts — scientific treatises, for example — were also copied and illustrated.



A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR THE RECREATION room of the new nursing home wing at Malheur Memorial hospital. A colorful lamp is being presented to Margaret Bennett, director of nurses (on right) by Job's Daughters of Bethel 33. In the photo with Mrs. Bennett are (l to r) Bethel Guardian Mrs. C. A.

(Louise) Wernick, Junior Princess Susan Kouns, Senior Princess Joyce Jennings, and Honored Queen Kathy Nelson. The presentation was made Monday afternoon during a Yuletide party sponsored by members of the hospital auxiliary. - Staff Photo.



MEMBERS OF THE JOSE MOSQUEDA FAMILY AS THEY told Santa of their Christmas desires when he made his third and final 1968 appearance Saturday at the Nyssa public library. The youngsters are (seated l to r) Rolando, Steven and Richard. The girls standing next to Santa are Alice and Ida Mosqueda. And behind the Jolly Old Gentleman are his helpers Carol Nelson and Doug Patterson - wearing gay, red and white clown suits and colorful wigs. - Journal Photo.