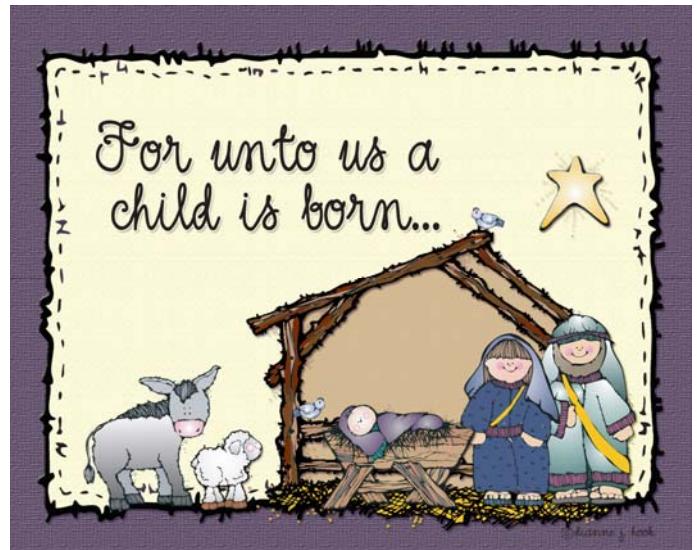




CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD



Holy Nights

By Maureen A. Taylor; FamilyTree Magazine

'Tis the season to find out where your family traditions come from—and how to incorporate some new ones.

Three major Christian holidays occur in December and early January: Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, the day before the birth of Jesus Christ; Christmas, Dec. 25; and Epiphany, Jan. 6, commemorating the coming of the three wise men and Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. Across many countries, cultures and regions, these holidays are celebrated in diverse ways. Gift-giving customs, symbols, songs and processions can all hold clues to ethnic roots:

Australia

While most Australian traditions are English in origin, Christmas cards feature native animals such as koalas. Palm leaves, ferns and flowering plants decorate houses during this summer holiday in the Southern Hemisphere.

Caribbean

On Dec. 26, residents celebrate Jonkonnu, a festival that combines English and African elements and dance movements.

Eastern Europe

Ukrainians hang spiders and webs on their trees as part of a folkloric tale about a woman who was too poor to decorate her tree so a spider spun webs for decoration during the night. In Russia before the 1917 revolution, an old woman named Baboushka brought children treats. During the Communist era, she was changed to Grandfather Frost. Slovakian children put polished boots in their windows for St. Nicholas to deliver gifts on Dec. 5. Moravians set up Christmas pyramids decorated with a star and shelves, one reserved for a nativity scene. A propeller on top of the structure turns from the heat of the candles on the shelves.

England

English children wait for Father Christmas to deliver presents. Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, brought the custom of tree decorating from his native Germany. The first Christmas cards

debuted here in the 1840s. Christmas crackers, small popping cardboard tubes with surprises inside, are popular during the holidays.

Ethiopia

The Coptic Church celebrates Ganna (Christmas) on Jan. 7. Ganna is named after a popular game similar to field hockey, which legend says the shepherds played upon hearing of Jesus' birth. Everyone wears white to a church service following a day of fasting.

France

Young children think of Advent as a calendar with a prize on every day between Dec. 1 and Dec. 25. Originally, Advent was a time to think about the future spiritual events of the season. Advent dates from 490 AD when the Bishop of Tours advocated fasting three days a week for the 40 days prior to Christmas. Extended families gather together after midnight Mass for *réveillon*, a banquet on Christmas Eve.

The celebration of Christmas in France varies by region. Most provinces celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December, which is a bank holiday. However, in eastern and northern France, the Christmas season begins on 6 December, *la fête de Saint Nicolas*, and in some provinces *la fête des Rois** is one the most important holidays of the Christmas season. In Lyon, 8 December is [la Fête de lumières](#), when Lyonnais pay hommage to the virgin Mary by putting candles in their windows to light up the city. *[Epiphany \(la fête des Rois\)](#) is usually celebrated the 6th of January, but in some places in France it is celebrated the first Sunday after January 1st.

French children put their shoes in front of the fireplace, in the hopes that *Père Noël* (aka *Papa Noël*) will fill them with gifts. Candy, fruit, nuts, and small toys will also be hung on the tree overnight. In some regions there's also *Père Fouettard* who gives out spankings to bad children (sort of the equivalent of Santa Claus giving coal to the naughty). Another important aspect of French Christmas celebrations is the [crèche](#) filled with *santons*, which is displayed in churches and many homes. Living *crèches* in the form of plays and puppet shows based on the Nativity are commonly performed to teach the important ideas of Christianity and the Christmas celebration.

Germany

Most sources credit Germans for starting the tradition of decorating Christmas trees, eventually bringing that custom to America. Elaborate hand-blown glass ornaments also first appeared in Germany. The German city of Lauscha was the manufacturing center for glass ornaments, although ornament production slowed after it became part of postwar East Germany. Children write letters and lists and leave them for *Christkindel* (southern Germany) or *Weinnachtsman* (northern Germany). Many towns hold a *Christkindelsmarkt*, selling handmade gifts and treats during the holidays.

One of the most recognizable images of the Christmas season, the Christmas Tree originated in Germany, possibly as early as 700 AD. The Christmas tree as we know it is most commonly credited to Martin Luther, who in 1530 was moved by the sight of stars shining though the forest of firs near his home that he apparently cut a small one and brought it indoors. He then placed lit candles in its boughs as a salute to the star of Bethlehem. By the 1800s, the Christmas tree custom was widespread

throughout many parts of Europe, and was brought to America by the Pennsylvania German immigrants in the 1820's.

Greece

St. Nicholas, patron saint of sailors and fishermen, gives out gifts. Gift giving takes place on Jan. 1, St. Basil's Day, in honor of one of the four fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church. On Epiphany, known as Greek Cross Day, crucifixes are blessed by dipping them into water.

Ireland

Most Irish people are Catholic and Christmas Day is almost entirely a religious festival. Most people go to church (Catholic Mass) and will find the church beautifully decorated and a "creche" or manger scene before the altar. The next eleven days are set aside for parties and a great amount of visiting. This ends on the twelfth night which is Epiphany.



A distinctive feature of Christmas decorations is the very large candle placed near the front window and lighted on Christmas Eve. According to one belief, the candle long served as a symbol of welcome to Mary and Joseph who sought shelter in vain on that first Christmas Eve. The ceremony of lighting the candle is one of simple ancient rituals during which prayers are said for the departed and the privilege of striking the match is usually given to a daughter named Mary. (Another tradition is that the candle be lighted by the youngest member of the family and snuffed out only by someone named Mary).

For centuries it has been a practice in Irish villages to set the kitchen table after the evening meal on Christmas Eve. On it is a loaf of bread filled with caraway seeds and raisins, a pitcher of milk and a large lit candle. The door is left unlatched. Thus, hospitality is extended to the Holy Family or to any traveler that might be on the road. Also it is said that the candles were "kindled to guide the angels who on Christmas night direct the New Born from the Heavens". The story of the abiding religious faith to which this nation has clung to so strongly for centuries is reflected in the symbolism of the lighted candle in the window, which spells out the simple beauty of the Christmas story.

Latin America

Las Posadas, a daily procession that re-enacts Joseph and Mary's search for shelter, is traditionally performed in the days before Christmas. Children leave their shoes in the window on Epiphany for gifts from the Magi. In Mexico, the holiday season ends with Candlemas, a religious ceremony on Feb. 2. A Mexican folktale recounts the story of a poor girl who presented the infant Jesus with a branch from a simple plant. As she laid it beside the manger, it turned red. Joel Roberts Poinsett, a botanist and the first US ambassador to Mexico, brought the plant to this country, where it came to be called a poinsettia.



Italy

Italian children leave their shoes or stockings near the fireplace to receive gifts on Epiphany from *La Befana*. They also receive presents from Father Christmas on Christmas Day. Nativity scenes and Christmas pyramids are part of Christmas displays.

Netherlands

Black Peter disciplines naughty boys and girls on St. Nicholas Day (Dec. 6), while *Sinterklass*, or St. Nicholas, rewards good children with candy and gifts. Wearing traditional bishop's robes,

Sinterklaas or St. Nicholas, rides into towns across Holland on a white horse where he is typically greeted with a parade.

Philippines

Because the Philippines is the only Asian nation where the majority of people are Christian, Christmas there is celebrated widely. The season begins on Dec. 16 with the *Misa de Gallo*, or "rooster's mass." Most families display *parols*, or star-shaped lanterns, and sing carols.

Poland

At midnight on Christmas Eve in Poland, many go to *pasterka*, or Shepherd's Mass. Afterward, the head of the family breaks an *oplatek*, a thin wafer made of wheat flour and water with a nativity scene stamped on it. Each family member breaks off a small piece and eats it. Later, they might feast on fish, sauerkraut, potato pancakes and beet soup.

Scandinavia

In Scandinavian countries, trees are strung with straw goats. Danes use red-and-white hearts and strings of miniature Danish flags. Finnish children believe that their gift giver, our Santa Claus, lives in Korvatunturi, in the northern part of their country. Swedes honor Santa Lucia on Dec. 13 by selecting a child to dress in a white gown with a red sash. The child wears a wreath on the head with lit candles and delivers traditional food. The *tomte*, or Christmas gnome, brings gifts on Christmas Day. In Norway, Christmas, or *Juledag*, is a quiet prelude to Dec. 26, when Norwegians start eating, drinking and celebrating until Jan. 13.

United States

Various regions of the United States also dealt with Christmas in their own unique ways that may be reflected in your family's heritage. Conservative Puritans in Massachusetts tried to outlaw Christmas in the 17th century. They felt that the pagan festival (Saturnalia) had nothing to do with the birth of Jesus. They felt that there was no biblical or historical support that 25 December is the birthdate of Jesus. To the Pilgrims , that first December 25th was just another day to work.

While Southern settlers brought over carols, yule logs and greenery from England. Christmas in New England was a time of religious devotion; the southern colonies welcomed the holiday by making as much noise as possible. Many of these regional differences grew out of the diversity of people in the area. In Alaska, for instance, Russian descendants still follow the traditions of the Orthodox Christmas on Jan. 7 with a procession carrying wheels trimmed with tinsel to resemble stars.

No holiday is complete without specific foods. My childhood memories revolve around large family parties on Christmas Eve, the tables laden with a potluck supper brought by relatives reflecting their particular ethnic heritage. My cousin always made *la tourtière*, a meat pie served by French Canadians after midnight Mass, originally part of *réveillon*.

A typical English meal featured roast goose or turkey, plum pudding and wassail to drink. Waves of immigrants to America have each added their own items to that traditional holiday menu. Fruitcake, for example, has its origins in Ireland, while gingerbread cookies began in the Netherlands and

Germany. Spain is notable for its marzipan and Sweden for its *lussekatt* buns at the festival of Santa Lucia, while mincemeat is an old English tradition. Feasts also are part of Kwanzaa and Hanukkah, of course. And no one who participates in an Italian Christmas Eve ever forgets the seven courses—with eel as one traditional offering.

Santa Claus - St. Nicholas

The original Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas, was born in Turkey during the 4th century. He devoted his life to Christianity and his reputation for generosity and kindness gave rise to legends of the miracles he performed for the poor and unhappy. Devotion to the legendary St. Nicholas spread throughout Europe during the Middle Ages and he became the patron saint of Sicily, Russia, Greece, charitable fraternities and guilds, sailors and children. After the Reformation, the legend of St. Nicholas all but disappeared in all Protestant countries of Europe except Holland, where Dutch children would place their wooden shoes by the hearth in hopes that they would be filled with a treat. The Dutch knew St. Nicholas as Sinterklaas, which eventually became corrupted in Anglican to Santa Claus. In 1822, Clement C. Moore composed his famous poem, "A Visit from St. Nick" (later published as "The Night Before Christmas"), and is credited with creating the modern image of Santa Claus as a jolly fat man in a red suit.

Jewish Holiday Traditions of Hanukkah



The history concerning Hanukkah goes back over two thousand years and involves the holy Temple of Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that the holy book of Torah was kept. The Torah contained the writings of Moses as well as the laws and customs of the Jewish faith. Over many years, the Temple was controlled by different rulers, some of whom did not respect the Jewish faith and put statues of their own gods in the Temple. Finally, after many years of war and persecution, the Jews regained control of the Temple but it was in ruins. History has it that the Jews began rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem in 165 B.C. A legend from that time tells how the Jews found a small amount of oil to light the Temple lamp. It was believed that the oil would only last one or two days. But the oil lasted for eight days and nights. The Jews celebrated during this time and rededicated the Temple. Hanukkah is celebrated between the early part of November and during late December. The word Hanukkah means dedication.

Hanukkah is also known as the "Festival of Lights" because in each synagogue, a holy lamp burns above Jewish scriptures. The light represents a symbol, being the strength of God. Hanukkah is celebrated by lighting of a candle on the Menorah (candle holder) holding nine candles. Eight candles represent the days the oil of the temple lamp lasted. The ninth candle known as Shammes, is a helping candle. The Shammus is the first candle that is lit, and used to light the rest of the candles. The candles are lit just after the sun goes down. Families sing a Hanukkah song while watching the candles burn.

Latkes (potato pancakes) fried in oil, jelly doughnuts and many other treats fried in oil are enjoyed during Hanukkah. Families sing various songs, play games in the light of the Menorah. Children add to their fun with Dreidels-- a four sided "top" that they spin meaning "A great Miracle Happened There." Like many other Jewish Holidays, Hanukkah is a special time for families to be together and celebrate the festivities of joy and thanksgiving.



The Dutch Sinterklaas

At the start, Sinterklaas was a real person. He was born in the 4th century in Myra, Asia Minor, where he became a bishop as a grown man. Little else is known about him—except that he loved children. There is a story of the three poor sisters. They were the beautiful daughters of a poor peasant. The first was very blonde, the second had raven black hair, and the third wore auburn tresses. When they grew up they fell in love with three pleasant young men. But the sisters could not get married because they had no dowry. That made them very sad. One night, as Sinterklaas was out riding, he looked through a window and saw three lovely, but sad sisters. And he heard why they could not marry the young men of their choice. He went back to his palace and gave the Grumpus three little bags. In each were a hundred golden ducats. He asked the Grumpus to drop the little bags into the girls' shoes, and an hour later they were rich. They married the three nice young men and lived happily ever after! To this day children leave a carrot in their shoes hoping to attract Sinterklaas' attention and reward. Since then Sinterklaas (or St. Nicholas as he is also known) has become known as the patron saint of unwed maidens.

How this kindly 4th century bishop made his way from Asia Minor through Italy, Spain and all of Northern



Europe by the 11th century where he is still honored today is hard to say, but by that time he became the patron saint not only of children and unwed maidens, but of sailors and the City of Amsterdam as well. When the early Dutch settlers came to America, they naturally brought with them their venerated old bishop. St. Nicholas and their favorite holiday, Sinterklaas. Indeed, after landing in the New World, the Dutch explorers, led by Henry Hudson, built their first church on the island of Manhattan in 1642, dedicating it to Sinterklaas. When the British took control of New Amsterdam in 1664, they adopted the Dutch recognition of Sinterklaas and merged it with their own observance of the Winter Solstice, Father Christmas—the merry, roly-poly, Falstaffian figure in high boots. Eventually, these two old gentlemen commemorated in December, merged into one.

Over the next few generations, Sinterklaas found his way into American literature. In 1809, writer Washington Irving created a jolly Sinterklaas for his popular Knickerbocker Tales. Then in 1822, an Episcopal priest named Clement Moore wrote a lighthearted poem called "A Visit from St. Nicholas" which featured a jolly old elf, his descent down a chimney on Christmas Eve, and a sleigh drawn by eight tiny reindeer. The Father Christmas image stuck, but he acquired a Dutch name—Santa Claus—a direct derivation from Sinterklaas.

Spain - "Feliz Navidad"

In Spain, the more common traditions include incredibly elaborate "Nacimiento" (nativity scenes), Christmas trees, and remarkable Christmas markets scattered among villages and cities with piles of fruits, flowers, marzipan and other sweets, candles, decorations and hand-made Christmas gifts. Often, as the Christmas Eve stars appear in the heavens, tiny oil lamps are lighted, warming village windows. The crowds at the Christmas market thin as shoppers return to prepare for the coming meal. The Christmas Eve gaiety is interrupted at midnight by the ringing of bells calling the families to "La Misa Del Gallo" (The Mass of the Rooster). The most beautiful of these candlelight services is held at the monastery of Montserrat, high in the mountain near Barcelona, which is highlighted by a boy's choir performing the Mass as if in "one pure voice." Christmas dinner is never eaten until after midnight. It is a family feast, and often highlighted with "Pavo Trufado de Navidad" (Christmas turkey with truffles; truffles are a mushroom-like delicacy found underground). After the meal, family members gather around the Christmas tree and sing Christmas carols and hymns of Christendom. The rejoicing continues through the wee hours of the morning. An old Spanish verse says... "Esta noche es Noche-Buena, Y no es noche de dormir" (This is the goodnight, therefore it is not meant for sleep.)

Christmas Day is spent at church, at feasts and in more merry-making. A custom peculiar to Spain is that of "swinging." Swings are set up throughout the courtyards and young people swing to the

accompaniment of songs and laughter.

In Spain, the Christmas holiday season is full of the usual Christmas festivities, but there is one tradition, not at all common elsewhere. Named "Hogueras" (bonfires), this tradition originated long before Christmas itself. It is the observance of the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year and the beginning of winter. It is characterized by people jumping over fires as a symbolic protection against illness. This fire-jumping can be seen primarily in Granada and Jaen.

It is not Santa who comes to Spain bearing gifts, but the Three Wise Men. The Spanish Christmas continues for a few weeks after Dec. 25th. On the Eve of Epiphany, January 5th, children place their shoes on the doorstep, and in the secret of the night, the Three Wise Men pass leaving gifts. January 6th, Epiphany is heralded with parades in various cities where candy and cakes are distributed to throngs of children. The three Wise men are seen everywhere in Spain at Christmas, visiting hospitals, orphanages, etc. The men who dress up in various "Wise men" garments are from all walks of life. The legend tells of the three Wise men traveling through the country on their way to Bethlehem. To properly receive them, the children fill their shoes with straw on Epiphany Eve. For their efforts, they find their shoes filled with presents the following (Epiphany) morning. Spanish children have a great fondness for the three Wise men, especially Balthazar.



Member's Family Traditions for the Christmas Holiday.

Linda Serna When I was a child, our family would always go out in the car and look at Christmas lights on Christmas Eve and magically Santa Claus would come while we were gone. It wasn't until I was 10 or 11 that I figured out that my Mom was always the last one in the car—she had to go to the bathroom or get something she forgot or so my Dad told us. How she managed to get the gifts under the tree for the five of us children in that short amount of time I'll never know but it helped keep the magic alive for quite some time—and I always did enjoy looking at the lights. Christmas morning was for 8:00 a.m. Mass in the front row on the right side and a special breakfast of waffles or pancakes after Mass.

When my six children were little, there were many years when they only got one gift (due to finances) and, of course, the apple and orange in their stockings. So we made a big deal of that one gift allowing each child to have their time in the spotlight to open the gift and show it off. Then we took down the stockings and let each one choose whether to eat the apple or the orange. All this took place after Christmas morning Mass because God came first (and I think it helped to heighten the expectancy). Then we would take the children over to their grandparents' houses after breakfast to continue the celebration.

Sylvia Van Houten- Since family was very important when I was growing up, it seemed very strange, after we married, when the holidays arrived to be so far away from family. The first two years we were married, another couple that Jim worked with invited us to join their family of six. They had no family in the area, so we became their family. When Jim was reassigned, I offered the same hospitality to other military families, who did not have family in the area we currently lived in. This became one of our family traditions, as our children were growing up, and when they came home from college there were always a few friends that came home with them.

My Spanish grandmother, made all the "German" dishes that my grandfather grew up with, especially the holiday cookie baking. My great grandfather had been a baker in Germany. I always remember my grandmother baking for days on end prior to Christmas, putting each batch of cookies in large jars. She would then make a

holiday cookie jar for each of the families and friends as a gift. I have taken on my grandmother's holiday baking tradition and making cookie tins for friends and family each year. I always try some new cookie recipe, but there are some that are just tradition and absolutely must be made every year. The one that is from my German heritage is Lebkuchen (from the Black Forest and Nuremburg regions), a molasses honey cookie. I will include a recipe at the end for you to try.

My husband is of Dutch heritage. In the Netherlands, tradition is that SinterKlass brings the children chocolate shaped letters that begin with the first letter of their given names. His Dutch grandmother always baked them cookie letters using a chocolate chip recipe. (His grandfather drove a bakery truck in Grand Rapids Michigan.)

Lebkuchen

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup molasses
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar (packed)	1 egg
1 tbsp. lemon juice	1 tsp. grated lemon rind (zest)
2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups all purpose flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. soda
1 tsp. cinnamon	1 tsp. cloves
1 tsp. allspice	1 tsp. nutmeg
1/3 cup cut up citron	1/3 cup chopped nuts
	Glazing Icing

Mix honey and molasses; bring to a boil. Cool thoroughly. Stir in sugar, egg, lemon juice and rind. Measure flour by dipping method or by sifting. Stir dry ingredients together, blend in. Mix in citron and nuts. Chill dough overnight.

Heat oven to 400 degrees (mod. Hot). Roll small amount of dough at a time, keeping rest chilled. Roll out $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick on lightly floured board; cut in oblongs, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " X 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " .

Place 1" apart on greased baking sheet. Bake 100 - 12 minutes, or until no imprint remains when touched lightly. Brush icing lightly over cookies immediately. Quickly remove from baking sheet. Cool and store in airtight container with cut orange or apple for a few days to mellow. Makes 6 doz. Cookies. I place the cut orange slices on wax paper ,in the container.

Glazing Icing : 1 egg white beaten 1 tbs. lemon juice 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups powdered sugar, sifted
Dash salt

Mix well and glaze cookies as soon as they come from the oven. Then remove to cookie rack to cool. The cookies are a dunking cookie, however, I use the oranges to mellow the cookies just as above. The taste is heavenly! The Lebkuchen I purchased when in Nuremburg didn't seem to taste as good as the ones my grandmother and I have made for generations.

I hope you enjoyed my Holiday gift to you. I had hoped more members would send some of their memories, perhaps next year. Merry Christmas, Sylvia Van Houten, OCCGS Newsletter Editor

The Origins of Popular Christmas Traditions

By [Kimberly Powell](#), About.com Guide

Dating back to Rome in 330 AD, the Christian holiday of Christmas is one of the oldest and most powerful celebrations in human history. Originally celebrated as a simple mass, Christmas has come to replace a number of other holidays in many countries, and a large number of traditions have become a cherished part of the family Christmas celebration.

Why December 25?

From the words *Cristes maesse*, or "Christ's Mass," Christmas is the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus. What's interesting about this is that Jesus was not born on December 25 as many assume. Actually, no one is sure when Jesus was born as the exact date is not mentioned in the Bible. December 25th is just a date picked by the Catholic church to eclipse the festivities of a rival pagan festival, *Saturnalia*.

Mistletoe and Holly



Two hundred years before the birth of Christ, Druids decorated their homes with mistletoe to celebrate the coming of winter. They believed the plant had special healing powers for everything from female infertility to poison. Scandinavians also considered the mistletoe to be a special plant, associating it with their goddess of love, Frigga. The custom of kissing under the mistletoe probably derived from this belief. Because of the pagan origins of mistletoe, the early church banned its use in Christmas celebrations, suggesting holly as an appropriate substitute. Holly's sharply pointed leaves were to symbolize the thorns in Christ's crown and the red berries drops of his blood. So Washington Irving, in *Christmas Eve*, relates the typical festivities surrounding the Twelve Days of Christmas, including kissing under the mistletoe. Irving continues his Christmas passage with a footnote:

"The mistletoe is still hung up in farm-houses and kitchens at Christmas, and the young men have the privilege of kissing the girls under it, plucking each time a berry from the bush. When the berries are all plucked the privilege ceases." We moderns have conveniently forgotten the part about plucking the berries (which, incidentally, are poisonous), and then desisting from kissing under the mistletoe when the berries run out!

Along with the holly, laurel, rosemary, yews, boxwood bushes and, of course, the Christmas tree, mistletoe is an evergreen displayed during the Christmas season and symbolic of the eventual rebirth of vegetation that will occur in spring. But perhaps more than any other of the Christmas evergreens, it is a plant of which we are conscious **only** during the holidays.

Poinsettias



Native to Mexico, poinsettias were named after America's first ambassador to Mexico, Joel Poinsett, who brought the plants to America in 1828. The Mexicans in the eighteenth century thought the plants were symbolic of the Star of Bethlehem. Thus the Poinsettia became associated with the Christmas season. The actual flower of the poinsettia is the small, yellow cluster found surrounded by bright, colored leaves often mistaken for petals.

O Christmas Tree

One of the most recognizable images of the Christmas season, the Christmas Tree originated in Germany, possibly as early as 700 AD. The Christmas tree as we know it is most commonly credited to Martin Luther, who in 1530 was moved by the sight of stars shining through the forest of firs near his home that he apparently cut a small one and brought it indoors. He then placed lit candles in its boughs as a salute to the star of Bethlehem. By the 1800s, the Christmas tree custom was widespread throughout many parts of Europe, and was brought to America by the Pennsylvania German immigrants in the 1820's. In 1880, Woolworths sold the first manufactured Christmas tree ornaments, and the first electrically lighted Christmas tree appeared in 1882.

Xmas

Of Greek origin, this popular abbreviation for Christmas originates in the Greek word for Christ, Xristos. During the 16th century, Europeans began using the first initial of Christ's name, "X" in place of the word Christ in Christmas as a shorthand form of the word.





Mr. and Mrs. Walter E. Fletcher

Our Webmaster, Lori Graham shared some antique Christmas cards and a New Year's greeting from the early 1900s. The wording on the Christmas greetings are old fashioned, but very sincere.

The officers and board members of Orange County California Genealogical Society wish each of our members a very happy holiday and look forward to seeing all of you at our meeting on January 4th, 2014 .