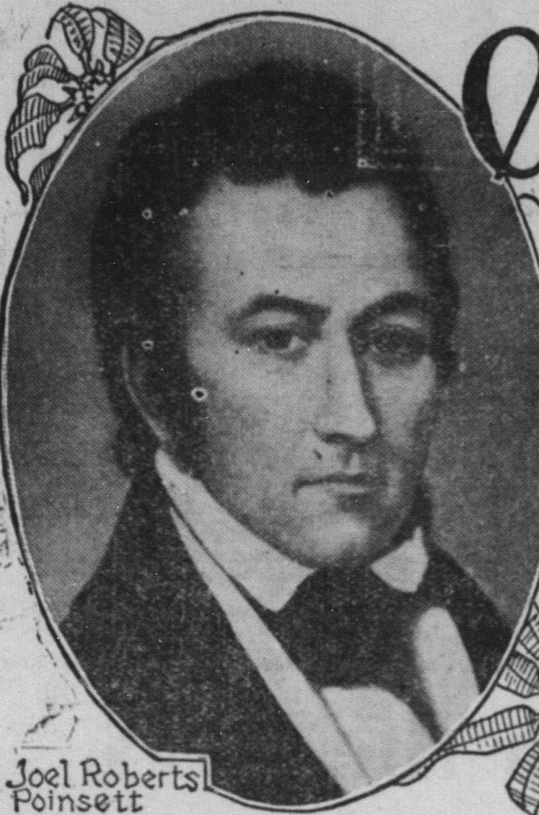


Men Who Helped "Make" Christmas



Joel Roberts Poinsett

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

WHEN you read the title of this article, did you exclaim, "Men who helped 'make' Christmas—why, what does that mean? There was only one man who made Christmas and he was born nearly 2,000 years ago."

True! If it had not been for the birth of Jesus Christ, there would be no occasion for celebrating December 25 as Christmas day. And if that celebration had been kept to its original form, there would be no occasion for writing an article such as this.

But the fact is that there has grown up around the celebration of Christmas a great variety of customs, traditions and practices which we now regard as essential parts of that observance even though they may have departed from its original meaning. Some of these have had such a gradual evolution that it would be impossible to ascribe them definitely to any one person. But there are others which we can trace directly to one or more individuals—hence the theme of "men who helped make Christmas" what it is now in this article.

Certainly Santa Claus seems to be an essential part of the Christmas celebration. Speak of him and there rises to mind a picture of a plump, elf-like little man who radiates laughter and good cheer. Why should he be that sort of person instead of the stern, gaunt, rather formidable figure, solemn and majestic in trailing robes, carrying in one hand a basket of presents and in the other a birch rod, as an awful warning to naughty children, such as he was when he was known as Sinterklass, or the Bishop-Saint Nicholas, by the first Dutch settlers in this country?

The answer to that question is the names of three writers—James K. Paulding, Washington Irving and Dr. Clement C. Moore—and an unknown American artist. It was Washington Irving who, in his "Knickerbocker's History of New York," in 1809 wrote the first description of the new type of Santa Claus and made Sinterklass, or St. Nicholas, the patron saint of the Dutch colonists of New Amsterdam, the archetype of all of those jovial, many-breeched, long pipe-smoking burghers.

The next writer to paint a word portrait of Santa Claus was Irving's friend and collaborator, James Kirke Paulding, who in his "Book of St. Nicholas," first published in 1827, said Santa Claus was "as gallant a little Dutchman as ever smoked his way through the world, pipe foremost."

But it remained for Dr. Clement Clark Moore in his poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas," to give a more definite word portrait of St. Nicholas and pretty definitely establish in the mind of the public what Santa Claus looked like.

How much Moore drew upon Irving and Paulding for his description is not known but there is a curious parallelism in some of his words and some of theirs, although Moore, himself, 40 years later said that "a portly, rubicund Dutchman living in the neighborhood of his father's country seat, Chelsea," near New York city suggested to him the idea of making St. Nicholas the hero of his Christmas piece for his children.

Then in 1839 a book called "The Poets of America," edited by John Keese, was published. It contained Moore's poem and the illustration for that was a picture of Santa Claus. (Reproduced above.) Who the painter or the engraver was is unknown but it is believed that this was the first time a picture of Santa Claus was ever printed. Thus it was Washington Irving, James K. Paulding, Clement C. Moore and the unknown illustrator of Keese's "Poets of America" helped "make" Christmas by giving us our present idea of the patron saint of the holiday.

What would Christmas be without Christmas hymns and Christmas carols? And what song has been more often sung on Christmas Eve or is more beloved than "Silent Night, Holy Night"? It was on December 24 of the year 1818 that Josef Mohr, assistant pastor of the newly established St. Nicholas' parish church in the little village of Oberndorf, near Salzburg, Austria, handed to Franz Gruber, a schoolmaster of Arnsdorf, who was organist for the church, a poem with the request that he write for it a suitable melody arranged for two solo voices, chorus and a guitar accompaniment—the reason for the latter being that the organ in the little church had broken down.

So Franz Gruber sat down at his grandfather's desk immediately, wrote a simple melody for the poem and that night on Christmas Eve, in St. Nicholas' parish church was for the first time sung "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht."

To the fact that the little organ in Oberndorf had broken down is due the widespread popularity of the hymn. The organ builder, Karl Manacher of Fügen in Zillertal, had been sent for to make the necessary repairs. He heard the air and hummed it in his native country, where it became very popular in a short time and soon spread all over the world.

Thus it was, too, that Josef Mohr and Franz Gruber, two Austrians, helped "make" Christmas.



First Portrait of Santa Claus



Washington Irving



The First Christmas Card



Einar Holboell

Do you enjoy sending out Christmas cards to your friends? If you do, then you should know the name of Sir Henry Cole, an Englishman, for it was he who originated this custom. Later famous as a social and educational reformer, Henry Cole was a pioneer in illustrating children's books with woodcuts of famous paintings. In 1846 he conceived the idea of sending decorative cards to his friends, bearing his good wishes for their happiness at Christmas. So he went to his friend, J. C. Horsley, a member of the Royal Academy in London, for the design and the result was the card which is reproduced above.

But few Englishmen followed Cole's lead and the business of making Christmas cards got under way very slowly in England. It was even slower in getting started in this country. In 1873 Louis Prang, a lithographer of Boston, exhibited the samples of his flowered business cards at the Vienna exposition and they attracted considerable attention. He had an agency in London and one of his women employees there (her name is unknown) suggested to him that he put a greeting in place of the name of his firm and issue them as Christmas cards. This was done the next year, so that 1874 marks the beginning of the Christmas card in this country.

So Sir Henry Cole, the Englishman, and Louis Prang, an American, can be added to the list of men who helped "make" Christmas.

Do your letters go out bearing a Christmas seal as well as a postage stamp these days? If they do, it's because Einar Holboell, a clerk in the post office at Copenhagen, Denmark, while sorting the mountain of Christmas mail in 1903, had the idea of another stamp for letters which should combine a Christmas decoration idea with some practical purpose.

He went with his plan to the head of the postal service and others with influence and authority. And so, when the first Christmas seal committee held a meeting to discuss the purpose and use of the possible income from the Christmas seal, and it was decided that the first object was the erection of a hospital for tubercular children, and, in general, the income from the seal should always be for the fight against tuberculosis, in one form or another.

Upon application to the then King Christian IX, Holboell secured the permission to have a likeness of the deceased Queen Louise on the first Christmas seal, and the king became so interested that he himself selected the picture which he wished used.

The success of the venture was overwhelming. The first printing of 2,000,000 seals was immediately increased to 6,000,000 and over 5,000,000 were sold. Since that time the Christmas seal sale in Denmark has brought in enough money to erect large numbers of sanitariums and convalescent homes for tubercular patients. Holboell, the modest postal assistant, became postmaster at Charlottenlund, near Copenhagen, and a Danish cross of Knighthood was his badge of honor. He died of heart trouble in his sixty-second year on February 23, 1927.



James Kirke Paulding

In 1909 the idea reached America and when Jacob Riis, a native of Denmark who had become an American, saw the queer little stamp on mail arriving from his homeland he immediately sent a letter of inquiry to Denmark. The reply was a personal one from Mr. Holboell, who explained in detail the method of procedure. Through an American woman, Miss Emily Bissell, the idea was presented to the American Red Cross, which, after several years of successful sales, turned the project over to the American National Anti-Tuberculosis association, which has since had charge of it.

So Einar Holboell, the Dane, Jacob Riis, the Danish-American, and Miss Emily Bissell, the American, helped "make" Christmas.

If William Eustis, secretary of war in 1800, hadn't turned down the suggestion of President Madison that Joel Roberts Poinsett be appointed quarter-master general of the army, we might never have had those brilliant crimson flowers which we know as poinsettias as a part of our Christmas decoration. Here's why:

Joel Roberts Poinsett was a native of South Carolina, who studied medicine for a time at Edinburgh university and later graduated in military science and mathematics at Woolwich academy. Ill health necessitated a long period of travel in Europe and Asia, after which he returned to America and requested President Madison to furnish him with military employment. Madison made the suggestion of the quarter-master-generalship but Eustis objected. So Madison offered Poinsett a mission to South America for the purpose of establishing friendly relations with the people there and investigating the prospects of their struggle for independence from Spain.

This led to his becoming something of an authority on Latin-American relations, to his appointment to a special mission to Mexico in 1822 and his appointment as the first United States minister to that country in 1823. While holding that position he first beheld the exotic beauty of a brilliant red flower native to that country.

When Poinsett returned to his home in South Carolina in 1829 he brought with him some of the seeds of the plant and just a hundred years ago, in 1833, he sold some of the plants which he had grown in his hothouse to Robert Buist of Philadelphia. Buist named the flower "Euphorbia poinsettia" and although the scientific name has since become "Euphorbia pulcherrima" the name poinsettia, honoring the man who brought it to this country, has stuck and it has become one of our chief floral decorations at Christmas time.

Poinsett later became secretary of war in Van Buren's cabinet, after which he retired from public life. In the cemetery of the town of Statesburg, S. C., is a simple marble tablet which bears this inscription "Sacred to the memory of Joel R. Poinsett, who departed this life on the twelfth of December, 1851, in the seventy-third year of his life. A pure patriot, an honest man, and a good Christian."

To this might be added "He helped 'make' Christmas."

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SMILES

FOXY YOUTH

Mother—Who's the brightest boy in your class, Tommy?
Tommy—Bill Smith! He pretends to be loony so he won't have to study!

Sh!

Farmer Hiram—That's a pretty heavy load for those horses to pull up that hill.
Farmer Silas—Be quiet. Those horses are blind and won't know the difference.—Chelsea Record.

Joke of the Season.

"Why, George! What are you laughing at?"
"Oh, I've just heard the best joke of the year."
"What is it?"
"Didn't you know that our maid has got a job in a china shop?"

Tries To

Hojack—What do you do with your dull old razor blades?
Skookum—Shave with them.

DIDN'T SEE THE POINT

"Captain," said the fair passenger on the liner plowing its way across the Atlantic, "how do you manage to find your way across all this water to your proper destination?"

"The captain smiled patiently. "By the compass," he told her; "the needle always points to the north."

The young lady nodded. "Yes, I understand that," she replied. "But suppose a time comes when you want to go south, how would you get on then?"

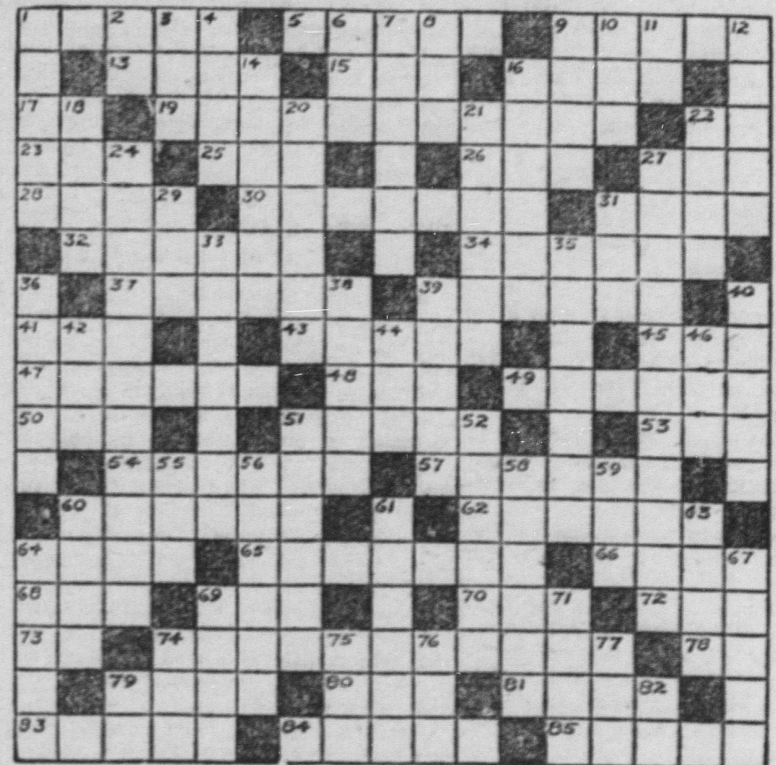
Had Their Meaning

The convivial husband had a friend to stay with him for the weekend. When the guest was being shown up to his room he noticed that there were faint crosses on several of the steps. He asked the reason. "Ah," whispered the host, "these come into operation after midnight. X means that the step creaks."

Eating, Anyway

Oshkosh—What makes you think Kokomo is prospering now?
Tishtish—Well, I saw gravy stains on his vest.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



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Horizontal.

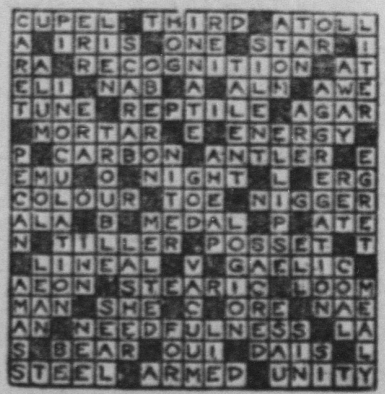
- 1—Vessel used for assaying gold
- 2—Tertinary
- 3—Coral island
- 12—Rainbow
- 15—Unity
- 16—Asterisk
- 17—God of sunshine
- 18—Discernment
- 22—Near
- 23—Yale
- 25—Seize
- 26—Tip
- 27—Fear
- 28—Melody
- 30—Snake
- 31—Used for bacterial culture
- 32—Plaster
- 34—Force (time distance)
- 37—Charcoal
- 38—Stag's horn
- 41—Australian ostrich
- 42—Evening
- 43—Dyne centimeter
- 47—Tint
- 48—Pedal digit
- 49—Negro
- 50—Greek exclamation
- 51—Decorative
- 53—Devoured
- 54—Steering lever
- 57—Hot egg nog
- 59—Linear
- 62—Scottish
- 64—Eternity
- 65—A fatty acid
- 66—Weaving machine
- 68—Home
- 69—Herself
- 70—Metal-bearing rock
- 72—No
- 73—One
- 74—Necessity
- 75—Note of diatonic scale
- 76—Speculator who sells
- 80—Yes (French)
- 81—Baked platform
- 82—Iron
- 84—Armored
- 85—Indivisibility

Vertical.

- 1—Sign of omission
- 2—Lit
- 3—Mistake
- 4—Legal security
- 6—Pig
- 7—Inform
- 8—Brazilian coin
- 9—Indivisible particle
- 10—Brown
- 11—Gold
- 12—Metric unit of volume

- 14—Sacred beetle
- 16—Noiseless
- 18—Sulphate of aluminum
- 20—King of the fabrics
- 21—Natural ability
- 22—Absent
- 24—Inscription of virus
- 27—Collection
- 28—Epoch
- 31—Metric land measure
- 32—Grief
- 33—Planetary orbit
- 36—A nut
- 38—Salt peter
- 40—Heron
- 42—Minor (musical)
- 44—Delft
- 46—Steep fax
- 51—Molten
- 52—A saying
- 55—Hysteria
- 56—Weir
- 58—Religious
- 59—Forty-five inches
- 60—Scravvy
- 61—Void space
- 63—Common fuel
- 64—Accumulate
- 67—Parasitocous
- 68—Wax impression
- 71—Elderest son of Isaac
- 74—Born
- 75—Because of
- 76—Equivocation
- 77—Wickedness
- 78—Exist
- 82—Another note on the diatonic scale

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