

'Merry Christmas, Mary Christmas,' Says Santa Claus

What's in a name? Plenty, if it happens to be Mary Christmas, or Santa Claus, and that's actually happened.

Both Evansville, Ind., and Racine, Wis., have their Mary Christmas, and at Marshall, Mo., there's a jolly fellow whose last name is Claus, and whose parents christened him Santa.

Evansville's Mary Christmas comes from an old family which has had a Mary in each generation. Racine's Mary Christmas got that way by marrying a fellow named Samuel Christmas, and she's now a telephone operator. Which explains that strangely personal and timely message long distance operators hear out of Racine around Christmas time: "This is long distance, operator—Mary Christmas."

Racine's Mary Christmas, who is short, chubby and looks just like the artist's conception of Mrs. Santa Claus, gets hundreds of fan mail letters every year. Three years ago she appeared on a Yuletide radio program and has been so deluged with fan mail ever since that she's founded a "shut-in" club which has members in 40 states, Canada, Hawaii, India, China and New Zealand.

Marshall's Santa Claus is similarly Christmas-minded. Each Yuletide he tries to answer the fan letters which come from all corners of the globe, many in such strange foreign languages that he can't reply. He's much in demand for church parties and other Christmas affairs. Santa is a plumber on weekdays, a vegetable gardener on the side and a preacher in the Church of God at Blue Lick, Mo., every Sunday. Two years ago, when plumbing business was bad, he was grateful for a \$250 check sent him by Mae West, the actress.

In Boonville, near Boston, lives an Ambrose Claus who with his wife last year celebrated his golden wedding anniversary. Like all other folks named Claus, they seem to have a lion's share of Christmas spirit.

How Other Lands Mark Christmas

A melting pot of the world, America has created its Christmas traditions from countless customs brought across the seas from foreign lands. In these far-away places the Yuletide symbols of bygone ages still endure. Here are a few of them:

ENGLAND:

Christmas to rural Englishmen means not only the observance of Christ's birth, but also a parting of the ways between the old year and the new. Preparations are started for the next year's farm work, which begins right after Christmas. Throughout the island such trappings as the holly and mistletoe remain undying traditions, nor is any Christmas complete without the Yule log burning. On clear frosty nights the carol singers raise their voices over the countryside. To many Englishmen's despair, such American customs as the turkey dinner are gaining a foothold.

GERMANY:

Two years ago storm troopers in Berlin lit bonfires in the public squares as a revival of the pagan custom of celebrating the winter solstice. But this distraction will not stop the Christmas-loving Germans from decorating their trees in every town and village, and joining in the famed Christmas hymn, "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht."

ITALY:

Most Italian families celebrate Christmas eve and spend the following day quietly in their homes. Here it is a feast more for grown-ups than for children, whose merry-making day comes 12 days later, on January 6. On Christmas eve families gather around the "ceppo" or Christmas log blaze. At nine p. m.



IN ITALY—Children of the Italian Alps at Christmas Time, preparing before a wayside shrine.

begins the "cene," or big supper, at which no meat may be served. Gifts for children, which come on Epiphany, are brought not by Santa Claus but by an ugly witch whose name is "Befana."

FRANCE:

Exchange of gifts comes not on Christmas but mostly on New Year's day, which in France is the big family day for reunions of cousins, aunts and uncles. Santa Claus is "Pere Noel," who leaves his gifts in wooden shoes. Christmas eve is not spent at home but in revelry and feasting.

BELGIUM:

Neither Santa Claus nor Pere Noel visit children here—but St. Nicholas makes the rounds, surprisingly, on December 6! A quaint Belgian custom is the putting up the chimney of a few carrots for the little donkey on which St. Nicholas makes his visits.

RUSSIA:

This anti-Christian nation forbids celebration of the Yuletide but no longer compels foreign residents to impart their own Christmas trees. Making an about-face, the Soviet government uses this emblem of childhood for its New Year's celebrations when Dedja Moroz, or Uncle Frost, appears with gifts for good children.

POLAND:

This Christmas celebration lasts until February 2 and is preceded by fasting which is not broken until the first star appears on Christmas eve. In all homes the tablecloth is placed over a layer of fragrant hay in commemoration of the manger.

HUNGARY:

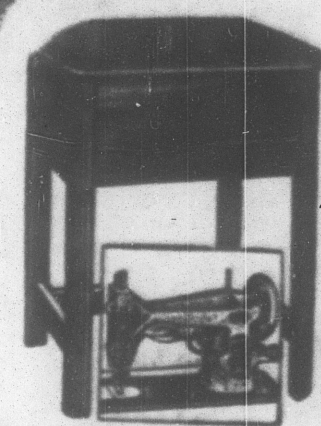
St. Nicholas leaves boxes of candy for children early in December, after which the youngsters must be on their good behavior. They write letters to the angels, who, they believe, bring the presents. If they find bits of tinsel on the floor, they claim this is angel's hair and proof that the angels are everywhere, observing which boys and girls are good.

HOLY LAND:

Where it all began nearly 20 centuries ago, worshippers reverently hail each Christmas at the church of Nativity which is built over Christ's traditional birthplace. It has remained unchanged more than 1,500 years. There pilgrims gather from all over the world to intone "Glory to the New-Born King."

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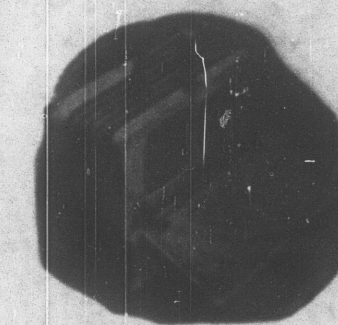


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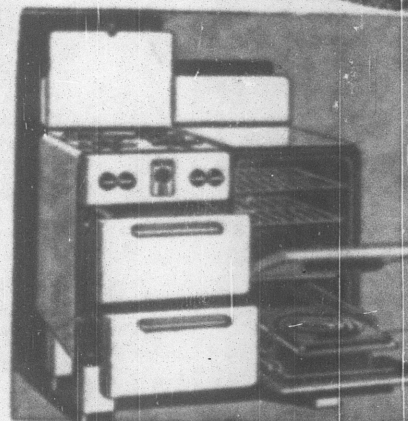
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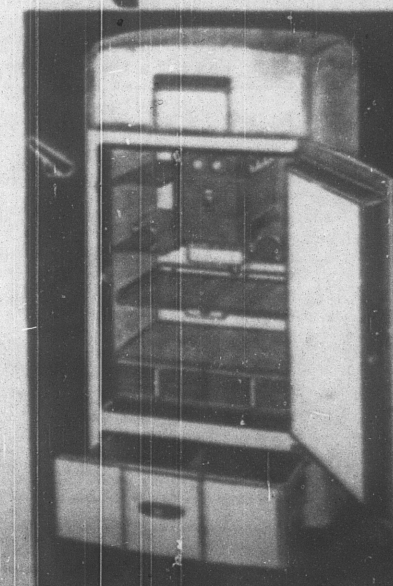
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MERCHANTS IN STATE FACE BEST YULETIDE TRADE IN TEN YEARS

Pennsylvania's retail merchants this year will have their busiest Yuletide season since 1928, with the Christmas sale accounting to an estimated \$28,000,000, the National Consumers Tax Commission predicts. Not since the booming 1927's has the prospect of a free spending holiday surge been so optimistic. Mrs. Myrtle Hochstetler, head of the commission's drive against "non-essential luxuries" stated in the business survey report. Throughout the country reports from business—from Jergo Industries

to the small storekeeper—point to the heaviest holiday trade in ten years. Mrs. Hochstetler added: "The buying spree following the trend of recent months, probably will carry the retail sales total to \$28,000,000 for the nation, an increase of more than seven per cent over last year."

The increased Pennsylvania trade, the NCTC report said, will mean added seasonal employment, heavier employee bonus checks and improved dividends. However, less cheering is the fact that an estimated \$2,700,000 of sales in the state will go to pay taxes which producer, manufacturer, wholesaler and distributor, of necessity, pass indirectly to Christmas shoppers in the price of their purchases. The NCTC's crusade against hid-

den taxes is headed in this state by Mrs. James K. Scott, national committee member, and Mrs. Herman H. Hoffman, state director, co-leaders of Pennsylvania's 1939 local tax study group. Both women live in Philadelphia.

"XMAS" ORIGIN. There has been comment on the abbreviated form for Christmas that is commonly used. Many think it inappropriate and undignified in use the shortened form, Xmas. The explanation of its origin is that the initial letter of the Greek name for Christ is X and the coincidence of its cruciform shape led to an early adoption of the initial as the figure and symbol of Christ. X is frequently

found on walls of the catacombs. When the early Christians used to make a representation of the Trinity, they would place either a cross or an X inside the corner of the Father, and the Holy Ghost, from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit, instead of the shortened form Xmas, instead of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINING. Turkey and cranberries, plum pudding, fruit cakes and mince pies are as much a part of our Christmas festivities as holly, mistletoe, Santa Claus and gifts. There are many superstitions concerning the food eaten on that day; apples eaten at midnight brought good health; there must be a plum pudding otherwise you would not be a friend during the year.