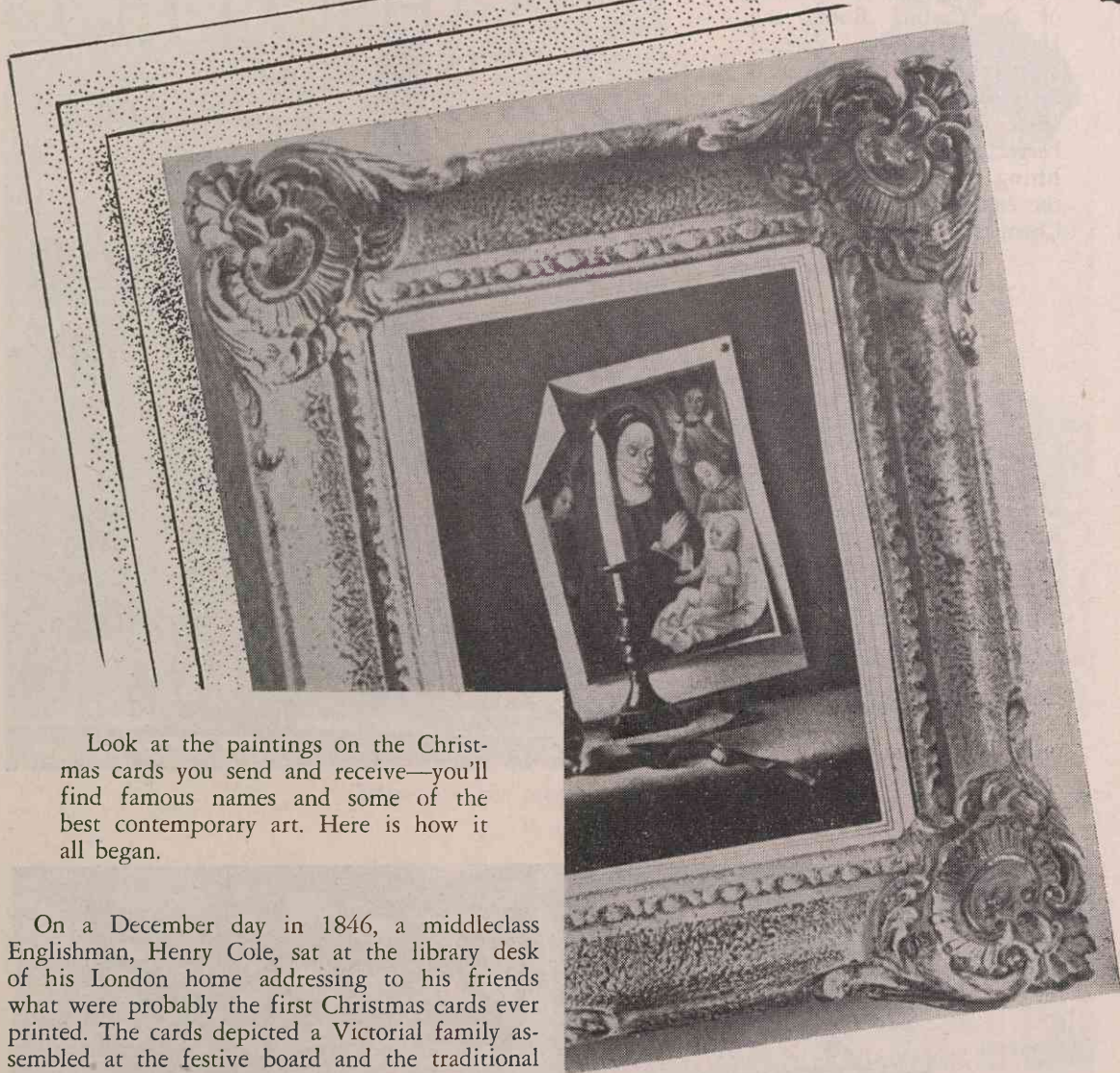


A Gallery



Look at the paintings on the Christmas cards you send and receive—you'll find famous names and some of the best contemporary art. Here is how it all began.

On a December day in 1846, a middleclass Englishman, Henry Cole, sat at the library desk of his London home addressing to his friends what were probably the first Christmas cards ever printed. The cards depicted a Victorian family assembled at the festive board and the traditional Christmas customs of giving to the poor. They also bore the now-classic greeting: "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you."

Cole, in a historic move, two months before had commissioned John Calcott Horsley, a Royal Academy artist, to paint the illustration for the card and had struck off a thousand lithographed copies. He dispatched them that December. This was such a markedly successful stroke of good will that plain Henry Cole subsequently became Sir Henry Cole.

Horsley's art was a far cry from today's fine Christmas card paintings, but he started a cycle which a hundred years later was to bring fine art into high favor on Christmas cards. An American shopping for cards this year may select, for instance, a painting called "Snow Under the Arch" by another Royal Academy member—Win-

ston Churchill, Britain's wartime prime minister and famed amateur artist. Or he might choose Peter Hurd's "One Night in Winter" or "Grandma" Moses' "The White Church" or "The Nativity" by Alexander Ross.

These, and others by more than a score of contemporary American, English, French and Canadian artists may be found this year among the fine art reproduced by the Hallmark greeting card company, a Kansas City firm whose efforts have resulted in a vast new reservoir of Christmas paintings. Today, there is not only a resurgence of fine art on Christmas cards, there is also among artists an almost universal revival of interest in Christmas and all the traditions and symbolisms associated with the festival.

Last year, when the Hallmark firm sponsored