

say that Cole's card should be attributed to the year 1843.

There is dispute about whose Christmas card came first, but hardly any about placing the origin of the Christmas card in the London of the 1840's. Curiously, the first cards coincided almost exactly with the introduction of the first Christmas tree to London by Prince Albert, Victoria's consort, and the publication by Charles Dickens of his classic Christmas stories, "A Christmas Carol," "The Cricket on the Hearth" and others.

Christmas cards appeared in America only shortly thereafter. But the origin of the first ones is clouded. One story, which provides a nice American contrast to the British tale, gives credit for the first Yule greeting to a New York state dry goods merchant, R. J. Pease of Albany. Pease designed, printed and mailed one of the first examples as an advertisement for his "Great Variety Store and Temple of Fancy."

The best early Christmas art in America came, not unexpectedly, from Boston in the 1870's with Louis Prang, a sensitive and art-loving lithographer whose ideas were years ahead of his time. Prang published his first Christmas card in 1874 and his last less than 20 years later. But in that brief interval he established a collection among the most prized in the world today.

Prang reproduced, just as Hallmark was to do three-quarters of a century later, the fine art of his

day—work by Elihu Vedder, Douglas Volk and J. Alden Weir among others, all long forgotten but capable artists. He even held art competitions. Curiously, the great Currier and Ives lithographs depicting nineteenth-century America, did not appear on Christmas cards until the twentieth century but their popularity today is unflagging.

Toward the turn of the century, a postal card craze swept the country, carrying Prang and most other card publishers before it. It lasted for nearly two decades and it was not until about 1908 that Christmas greetings of the type we know today reappeared. The resurgence of fine paintings on Christmas cards did not occur until the 1930's but its hold on the tastes and imaginations of Americans has become more secure in each succeeding year.

Whether Christmas card art in the future will swing toward reproduction of religious art of the Renaissance, the masters of nineteenth-century impressionism, or the modern interpretations of contemporary artists, it is almost sure to continue. That is not to say that Santa Claus, holly wreaths, candles, bells and Yule logs will be abandoned as Christmas card illustrations. They are age-old symbols as warm and appealing today as a hundred years ago. But fine art for Christmas has found a response so loud and clear all over the country that it promises to grow and grow. Sir Henry Cole definitely started something.

VISITORS



One of the recent visitors to Ecusta was Gunter Lodffler, Agricultural Exchange Student from Germany. He is shown above with Jim Farley, left, Assistant Agent of TVA farms in Henderson and Transylvania Counties, and Otto Goepfert, right. Gunter is a senior agricultural student and will graduate in June when he returns to Germany. He has been in the United States since June, 1950, and during his visit, he will spend

time with the Agricultural Extension Service in Washington, New York, North Dakota, and North Carolina. His visits in North Carolina are confined to Transylvania, Rowan and Montgomery Counties. The reason that he visited Transylvania is because the conditions here are similar to Bavaria, Germany—climate, weather, and small farms in a mountain region where much emphasis is placed on dairying.