

# MERRY CHRISTMAS

## THE CHOWAN HERALD

Christmas Greeting Section

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"Oh Come, All Ye Faithful, Joyful and Triumphant"

### Smiling Spirit Of Christmas Enters Now

Everywhere, There Is Fellowship, With Faith, Feasting, Fun

By ANNA MANG

Christmas is: A time for sharing and surprises, a time for magic and merriment, and a time to say, "Glad greetings, one and all."

Christmas is: The season of song and celebration, the season of little children and love and laughter, and the season of worship and rejoicing.

Christmas is: For fellowship and feasting, for family and friends, for home and happiness. But Christmas, too, is for remembering the stranger within the gates, for cheering the lonely, comforting the sorrowful, befriending the needy.

Christmas is: For everyone — for those of Christian faith who celebrate the Day as a holy time of highest importance, and for those of other faiths, who love and observe the Yuletide as a holiday dedicated to good will and good cheer.

Best of all, Christmas is: Here! Throughout this community, plans and preparations reach their peak. Every joyous surprise is at the point of revelation. The tree lights go on, the carols ring out, the gaily-wrapped gifts are delivered.

With gleeful smiles, the children welcome Santa's bounty, while the grown-ups greet one another, and talk and laugh and even shed a happy tear or two, rejoicing in the deep and tender meaning of the Christmas spirit.

If there was a bit of hustle — and even some hassle — about the getting-ready process, all is now forgotten in the glow and glory of Christmas. The quickened pace of modern living seems to make it almost impossible to prepare for the holiday without setting, at times, a somewhat hectic pace.

Be that as it may, the glad, true spirit of the season inspires this Christmas planning, and Christmas realities, in all their wonder and warmth, more than make up for the pre-holiday hurry and scurry.

Perhaps the most enduring of holiday traditions is that of exchanging greetings.

Christmas cards are a relatively new part of a holiday that has been celebrated for centuries. In fact, this year marks only the 95th anniversary of Christmas cards in America.

But the custom of greeting friends and neighbors and wishing them good cheer is as old as the holiday season itself.

Today brings a special kind of "Christmas card." This edition of this newspaper is a community greeting card, with special greetings from businessmen of the community who offer their good wishes and their appreciation to all.

#### Where Tree Grew

The first Christmas tree was a palm from Egypt. Or it was a huge tree in a forest, symbolic of mankind. Or it was the Paradise Tree of medieval legend.

Though holiday legend and lore offers many an explanation for the origin of the Christmas tree, nobody knows for sure exactly when and where the first decorated tree appeared.

And who cares? It's fun to hear the legends of the past, with all their mystery and magic, but the thing that matters most is that the tradition of the tree is here, adding joy to Christmas.

#### Naming Santa

Santa Claus is a tradition — a pleasant one, indeed. And, traditionally, he owes his name to a gift-giver of the past.

St. Nicholas, a fourth century bishop who became the patron saint of children, was noted for his generosity. His Dutch name was "Sinter Niklass," which gradually changed to Santa Claus.

Even today, Santa is also known as "St. Nick."

#### Sending Greetings

"We wish you a merry Christmas."

#### Paintings Show Sacred Message Lives Anew

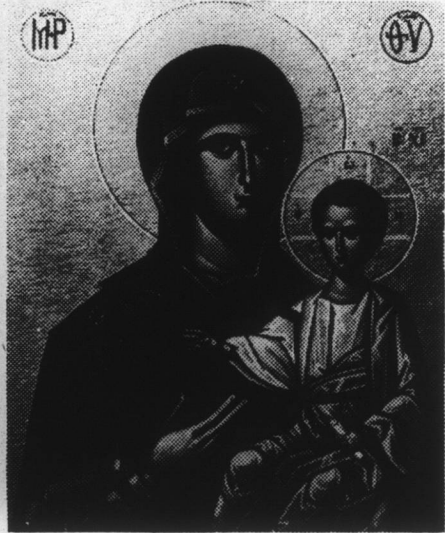
YESTERDAY AND TODAY, Byzantine icons tell the Christmas story. Like that sacred story, the style of Byzantine art is unchanging through the centuries, as these paintings illustrate.

BYZANTINE ART of yesterday appears in the painting (far left), "Virgin and Child Enthroned with Angels." By an unknown Byzantine painter, it is executed in tempera on wood, with a gold ground. From the Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Lizzie Bliss, 1931.

NATIVITY SCENE (near left) shows how iconography continues the ancient Byzantine style, with symbolic feeling. The Madonna and Child are central figures, Joseph and a shepherd appear at the left and the manger is shown, with historical accuracy, as a cave in a rocky hillside. This icon is the work of John Pappaspiopoulos of the Byzantine Icons Studio.

PAST AND PRESENT meet as artists turn to a beloved subject, the Madonna and Child. Out of the past comes the painting at top left. In a Byzantine style, it's by an unknown Russian painter in tempera on wood and is inscribed in Slavonic, "Our Lady of Kazan." (From the Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Mrs. Henry Morgenthau, 1933). How the Byzantine style continues today is shown in the icon at top right, created in tempera by the contemporary iconographer, John Pappaspiopoulos.

ABOUT WISE MEN Except for the words of St. Matthew, legend accounts for the little that is known about the wise men. One of the legends says that the star appeared to them once more, near the end of their lives.



### Telling Story Of Nativity

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

"And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger." Luke 2:15-16.

As even little children know, the words of St. Luke tell the story of the Miracle in a manger. Shepherds watching in the fields, herald angels singing — these things Christians can picture today because of St. Luke, the physician who became Christ's disciple.

Traditionally, St. Luke did still more to preserve the spiritual treasures of the Christmas story. He literally pictured the Madonna.

According to this tradition, St. Luke was an iconographer as well as a physician, and as such he created the first image of the Madonna, a painting that became the guide for many icons in later centuries.

As legend has it, St. Luke's icon of the Madonna and his other paintings were the forerunners of the style of artistic expression known as Byzantine art.

Oppressed and suppressed in some eras, Byzantine religious art has so original and distinctive a style that it returned again and again, to thrive throughout 12 centuries. Today, it is enjoying a rebirth, through the efforts of dedicated iconographers.

#### Showing Images

Iconography is a system for representing Christian subjects by means of pictures or images. Originally, the term meant "portrayal," and applied especially to panels portraying the figure of Christ, the Madonna, a saint or some scene from the Bible, according to the Grolier Book of Art.

In the Greek Orthodox Church icon technically means a movable religious painting. However, iconography often refers, more broadly, to wall paintings and mosaics as well as portable icons.

#### Going Iconoclastic

The art of the Byzantine — or Eastern Roman — empire first flourished under the rule of Justinian, in the 6th century A.D.

But trouble loomed ahead. When Emperor Leo III came to power, he brought with him a deep hatred of all images, especially icons, say the editors of the Encyclopedia Americana.

As an Iconoclast — hater of icons — Leo forbade the creation of religious figures and images, and the Iconoclastic Age began in 726.

Paintings on church walls were whitewashed, ivories and mosaics removed, countless works of art destroyed.

#### Comics Get Help

When icons returned to favor in the 9th century, the

#### Iconography? It's Part Of Today

The ancient Byzantine art of iconography is a contemporary art, too, and very much a part of today. So declares John Pappaspiopoulos, leading iconographer and owner-creator of the Byzantine Icons Studio, New York.

He points out that the turn of the century Art Nouveau technique, which has influenced much contemporary art, is related to Byzantine religious art. A non-realistic use of color and flattening of perspective are typical.

As an iconographer, Mr. Pappaspiopoulos leads the development of a "Byzantine art of the 20th century."

Assisted by the artists of his studio, he has decorated some 30 churches in the United States. In his native Greece, he has decorated 19 Athens churches.

Like Byzantine artists of centuries past, Mr. Pappaspiopoulos works with traditional authentic egg tempera. He makes his own tempera from egg, vinegar and ammonia. To this emulsion, coloring agents are added.

He makes extensive use of gold leaf, another traditional element in Byzantine art. His work shows his own personal touch but always follows the pure Byzantine style.

#### Symbolism Rules

Surviving wars, crusades and conquests, Byzantine art flourished till the middle of the 15th century.

Over the years, Byzantine artists influenced others, but were rarely influenced by others. Though the early Renaissance brought realism, the colorful, decorative and formal qualities of the Byzantine style remained virtually unchanged.

In Byzantine art, highly stylized figures appear, with little or no three-dimensional effect. Gold backgrounds suggest almost no sense of space.

Familiar scenes such as the Nativity show painted figures that are allegorical, mystical, symbolic — but never realistic in color or form.

For believers of the Greek Orthodox faith and other Eastern churches, the symbolic nature of Byzantine art

### Holiday Blends Many Customs

"Anybody found feasting or observing Christmas day in any way shall pay a fine of five shillings."

And so, throughout New England Pilgrim settlers had to treat Christmas as just another working day. Governor Bradford noted that "no man rested all day" on December 25, 1620, say the editors of Encyclopedia Americana.

Today, in the United States and Canada, Christmas celebrations are a colorful blend of customs from many lands. The main features of the holiday festivities are much the same everywhere — Santa Claus, Christmas trees, gifts, greetings, feasting, family visits, carol singing.

Each of these customs has its own history, and for the student of holiday lore and legend, the fascination lies in the variety of traditions brought by settlers from other lands and assimilated into what is now a truly American, or truly Canadian Christmas.

#### Displaying Tree

The custom of the Community Christmas Tree began in the early 1900's with the people of Pasadena, Calif., who decorated a tall evergreen on Mount Wilson with lights and tinsel.

Madison Square in New York and the Common in Boston were the scene of trees set up in 1912. In 1914 Independence Square in Philadelphia had its first holiday tree.

Around each of these trees choirs gathered and sang carols.

The custom of lighting the National Community Christmas Tree in Washington, D.C. began in 1923 when the University of Vermont sent a large tree to President Calvin Coolidge.

#### Add Special Touch

In Quebec, customs from France lend their special touch to a Canadian Christmas.

France gave Canada the "creche," gatherings after midnight Mass with family and friends, savory pork pies

called "tourtières," collecting gifts from door to door for the less privileged persons of the community.

After mass on Christmas Eve, the people of Quebec gather at homes of loved ones to participate in a night-long feast called "réveillon."

#### Performing Pageant

From Germany came the Nativity pageant, and the first play of this sort in the U.S. was performed at the German Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity in Boston, in 1851. Children dressed as Oriental shepherds offered gifts to the Christ Child at the altar, singing carols at the same time. The gifts were later distributed to the poor of the parish.

#### Play Delights

A hybrid Spanish-Indian play, called "Los Pastores," introduced by Spanish monks, may still take place in the backyards of San Antonio, Tex., at Christmastime. With no props, curtains and a cast of amateurs, it yearly delights with its spiritual innovations.

It runs from Christmas to Candlemas, in homes located in out-of-way places so only the initiated can find it. The object is to prevent the merely curious observer from watching this spiritual miracle play.

#### Decorating with Cards Can Be Yule Project

When children need a change from the toys on Christmas day, a promising project could be to let them see what they can do with the family greeting cards.

Here are some suggestions from Jeannette Lee, art director for Hallmark.

Tape or staple cards to lengths of ribbon and hang them on walls or doors.

Make a Christmas wreath by attaching cards to a circle of cardboard.

"Frame" cards with construction paper.

Decorate a screen with cards.

ESTABLISHMENTS SEND GREETINGS -- PATRONIZE THEM