

MERRY CHRISTMAS

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CHRISTMAS GREETING SECTION

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Stained Glass Windows Celebrate Life of Christ

The impact of its incandescent splendor and its overwhelming physical magnitude make the stained glass window one of the most spectacular art forms ever. They are at once dazzling and awesome. Since stained glass owes its artistic existence to light, it is directly affected by its environment.

Jewel-like Brilliance

Almost undiscernible from its exterior, the stained glass windows of a Gothic cathedral, viewed from its interior, reveal tier on tier of dazzling and sparkling windows. The brilliance is intensified not only by the impurities and bubbles within the glass itself, but by the dirt and weathering of the exterior as well. Just as a jewel, its brilliance enhanced by its many facets, glimmers and glows, so do we find the stained glass window dazzles and dances as the position of the sun's rays move through it. Each mark or scar on its surface further intensifies its brilliance.

Early Stained Glass

Colored glass beads were worn by the ancient Egyptians and glass blowing was known to the Roman Empire, but no one really knows just when and where stained glass was first used. The cathedral window was Gothic in origin, though examples of stained glass that possibly date from the eighth century, were found in France.

Biblical Themes

Windows that told stories of the Bible and the saints were first conceived in the twelfth century. Five larger-than-life-sized figures, The Prophets, in the windows of the Cathedral of Augsburg, Germany, are the oldest stained glass windows still to be seen in their original setting. One of the greatest existing series of windows, in the Cathedral of Chartres, France, depicts scenes from the Old and New Testaments, the Virgin and Christ, Apostles and Saints. These date from 1200-1240.

New Uses

Until the end of the Middle Ages stained glass windows, monumental and religious, were so costly that the only buildings deemed worthy to receive them as gifts were houses of God. Stained glass became secular as well as church art with the increasing affluence of the growing middle class.

Contemporary Stained Glass Windows

After a period when interest in stained glass windows waned, the late 1800's brought about new and original designs and color schemes. Artists Charles J. Connick and Wilbur Herbert Burnham became well known for their beautiful windows designed for the Cathedrals of St. John the Divine and St. Patrick in New York City, Grace Ca-



thedral in San Francisco and other churches in the United States. In France, Henri Matisse, Georges Rouault, and Fernand Leger designed windows for churches in Assy and other areas. Rebuilding of churches damaged during World War II, in Germany and England, resulted in new and outstanding stained glass windows in contemporary designs.

A Gift to the World

Stirring in their beauty and magnitude, stained glass windows inspire and reinforce in blazing glory the message they contain . . . a message of brotherhood and love and promise, and a renewal of our faith in all mankind.



Left — THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT scene from the Labor Bay of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York City. Photo by C. Harrison Conroy.

Above — PASSION, DEPOSITION — Carmelite Church of Boppard-am-Rhein, Germany, 1445. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Thomas Leland Fund.



Right — ANNUNCIATION — Segment of window from the castle chapel at Ebreichsdorf, Austria, about 1390. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection.

"Christmas Fantasy" A legendary doll house comes to sparkling life

The Christmas season celebrated in museums across the country, brings a rich panoply of holiday customs, traditions and dazzling beauty. One such display, a Christmas exhibition at The Museum of the City of New York, "A Party at the Stettheimers" was put together by John Noble, curator at the Museum. It was a labour of love and involvement for Mr. Noble who says the personality of the creator of the house "very clearly expressed itself" in determining what he could and could not do, in creating a Christmas fantasy in this unique doll house.

A different level of reality has been achieved and a set of dolls artfully designed to bring the house to sparkling life. It is the Stettheimers themselves, Florine and Ettie, Carrie and their mother, who are portrayed, and the house was decorated for Christmas as they might have done it in the mid-1920's, and peopled with some of their illustrious friends.

The Stettheimer House was made during the 1920's by Carrie Walter Stettheimer, one of three fabulous sisters who, with their mother "ruled for almost a generation one of the acknowledged intellectual salons of our town." (Henry McBride).

Given to the museum 30 years ago, the doll house was the life-long project of this wealthy spinster. It has advanced decorating ideas, a miniature gallery, and as Mr. Noble suggests, almost ghostly glimpses into the life of the Stettheimer sisters.

Florine Stettheimer was a self-taught painter and stage designer whose works were exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art, in the 1940's after her death. Ettie Stettheimer wrote novels under the name of Henrie Waste. Carrie, long considered the least talented of the three sisters, created her fabulous doll house, putting together its elaborate furnishings herself. Carrie Stettheimer created



STETTHEIMER DOLL HOUSE decorated for Christmas. Mother and daughter at tea in the living room. Courtesy Museum of the City of New York.



STETTHEIMER DOLL HOUSE decorated for 1920's Christmas. Friends in and around the art gallery include Gaston Lachaise chatting with painter Marcel Duchamp, writer Henry McBride greeting Florine Stettheimer, Edward Steichen on the balcony photographing Elizabeth Duncan. Courtesy Museum of the City of New York.

a diminutive world not unlike the one in which she lived . . . one of embroidered bed sheets, bedrooms lined in chintz, luxurious draperies, crystal chandeliers.

Original petit point covers many of the chairs and also carpets the living room floor.

All the miniature pieces have been faithfully reproduced. There are tiny bottles atop a dressing table, a bathroom scale of minute proportions, dishes and cutlery of microdimensions, and would you believe, a working elevator!

In the nursery which is appropriately papered and furnished, there is a set of doll furniture that could fit in a nutshell.

The house was filled with dolls of the Stettheimers and their friends, by Mr. Noble. The dolls were modeled from Florine's paintings and dressed in authentic styles of the day. Among them are sculptor Gaston Lachaise, painter Marcel Duchamp, writer Henry McBride, photographer Edward Steichen, composer Virgil Thompson and other eminent personalities who frequented the salon. Some of the greatest literary and artistic figures of the 20's and 30's were part of the coterie attending the small formal dinner parties in the lavish apartment of Mrs. Stettheimer.

The most remarkable feature of the doll house is its art gallery containing what has proved to be a choice collection of works by important artists of the period, all created especially for this mini-mansion. Of the many small original masterpieces, perhaps the most celebrated are Marcel Duchamp's miniature version of his "Nude Descending a Staircase" and the alabaster "Venus" by Gaston Lachaise.

The festive doll house, with its glittering ephemeral decorations and its sojourn occupants, show a glimpse of a lifestyle now almost lost, a glimpse of people who have become legends.

The Miracle of Christmas

The merry rejoicing at Christmas, celebrating the Birth of Christ, seeks to recapture the glory and wonder of the Nativity. People everywhere come together in warmth and goodwill, recalling the Source of the Spirit that binds them together.

Although Christmas is celebrated all over the world, it is not really known whether or not Jesus, as a boy, ever had a birthday party. Jews of His time did not celebrate birthdays . . . such observances were for kings and other important people, who lived in palaces. With or without birthday parties, Jesus had an enchanted childhood, so say the legends.

One such story says He made mud-pie birds one rainy day, and as He finished them, they flew away. For having bowed down to give its fruit to His Holy Mother, Jesus rewarded a palm tree by having a cutting of it planted in Paradise.

The Magic of Christmas is happily contagious, transforming the world in an atmosphere of brotherhood and anticipation. Its magic brings families together, inspires a spirit of generosity and giving, and fills the heart with a heady lightheartedness long remembered from one's childhood.

For it is in childhood that the magic of the Yuletide is felt most keenly. The air quivers with excitement and the promise of things to come. Pungent smells fill the house and little ones can hardly sleep, for listening to the furtive sounds of mom and dad tiptoeing and whispering and wrapping, far into the night.

An old French proverb says "Miracles happen only to those who believe in them." Surely, we can all believe! Surely we can reinforce our faith in miracles!

Women's lib endorses green Christmas

For about 35 years both men and women have been sentimentally dreaming of a "White Christmas." The poignant message of Irving Berlin's popular song is dear to us all, at holiday time. However, a Green Christmas is an ancient custom and more universally observed.

At pagan winter festivals in early times, winter flowering plants and evergreens were prized for their promise of the return of the sun and of spring. Holly and ivy are part of that ancient heritage and were extolled in an old Christmas carol "The Holly and the Ivy."

As far back as those ancient pagan games, holly was characterized as masculine, ivy as feminine. At a later date, it was decided that spiny-leaved hollies are "he" and smooth-leaved hollies are "she."

Depending on the kind of holly brought home at the holidays, it was determined whether he or she would be head of the house, the New Year!

A Festive Name

"Merry Christmas" in June? September? It is for a lovely young lady in Sacramento, California, whose name is truly Merry Cherece Christmas!

In answer to endless inquiries and as many jokes, this charming young woman never tires of explaining that her name really is Merry Christmas, and is spelled just that way. She is used to people thinking it's funny and the constant teasing, but enjoys the fun of it as much as others.

Miss Christmas, whose fame has spread all over the world, spends a considerable amount of time answering the many people who write her. She starts writing her Christmas cards in September.

Asked about marriage proposals and changing her name, Miss Christmas responded "Well, I've seriously thought about marriage a couple of times, but I was raised the old-fashioned way and I guess I'm looking for an old-fashioned type of person who thinks like I do. I really like the traditional things — like Christmas."

Greeting cards have colorful, historic sources

Each year researchers come up with more and more fascinating information about the origins of Christmas and New Year greetings.

Greeting cards are usually made of stiff paper or cardboard, but cloth, vellum, leather, celluloid, metal, wood, clay, cork, and new materials have been added to their designs. Cards and their messages vary in size. In 1929 an inscribed grain of rice was presented as a Christmas greeting to the Prince of Wales, and in 1924, President Calvin Coolidge received a Christmas card that measured 21 x 33 inches!

In ancient Egypt the New Year was celebrated by the exchange of symbolic presents such as scented bottles and scarabs inscribed "an ab nab" ("all good luck"). The Romans exchanged strenae, originally branches of laurel or olive, often coated with gold leaf. Symbols of seasonal good will, such as a Roman lamp and the figure of Victory surrounded by strenae, were combined on objects of baked clay, with the inscription "Anno Novo faustum felix tibi sit" ("May the New Year be happy and lucky for you"). The acknowledgment of the New Year with the exchanges of good will continued in Europe through the early days of Christianity.

In the 15th century, master wood engravers produced inscribed prints which had the same intent as the modern Christmas and New Year cards. One of these shows the Christ Child with halo, before a cross holding a scroll on which appears "Ein gust selig ior" ("A good and happy year"). During the 18th and early 19th centuries, copper plate engravers were producing prints and calendars for the New Year and greetings by merchants and tradesmen were common.

Recognized as the first Christmas card is one designed in England by J. C. Horsley, in 1843 for his friend Sir Henry Cole. An edition of 1,000 copies was placed on sale at Felix Summerly's Treasure House in London in 1846. They were printed by lithography on stiff cardboard, in dark sepia and hand colored. The design shows a family party in progress, beneath which is the greeting, "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You."

A similar card was designed by W. M. Egley of London and produced as an etching in 1848. While this card is more elaborate, its design suggests a relationship to the Cole-Horsley card. The same may be said of an American Christmas card of the same period, designed by R. H. Pease of Albany, N.Y., which bore the inscription, "Pease's Great Variety Store in The Temple of Fancy." Sentimental cards were exchanged and collected in the United States from 1830 to the Civil War and many have survived . . . among them an "expanding heart" Christmas present or greeting card in purse form, dating from about 1859.

Today you can say Merry Christmas in Macedonian, Greek, Hungarian, any one of 32 languages plus Braille. There are greeting cards available in our polyglot nation in Polish, Spanish, Japanese, Armenian, Croatian, Chinese, Macedonian, Portuguese, Greek, Swedish, Norwegian, Hungarian, Lithuanian, to name just a few. Distributed throughout the United States, many are produced in this country, others come from abroad.

It was noted by one of the manufacturers of these Christmas cards, that whenever there is turmoil or a revolution in a foreign country, the sales in that language soar. Since type faces in some languages are unavailable, many of the exotic messages are photographed from the originals. In the case of some Chinese messages, a waiter in a Chinese restaurant who is also an artist, wrote the greetings on a piece of paper from which they were photographed and reproduced.

¡Felices Navidades! Froliche Weihnachten! To you all!

SCENTED GIFT

Pomander balls make beautiful gifts trimmed with velvet ribbons, lace and pretty braid. Tie them prettily from bits and pieces you have tucked away in your sewing box. Their fragrance will last long after the holidays are gone.

CHRISTMAS WRAP

Aluminum foil makes any gift special looking and is especially marvelous for wrapping those odd shaped things that never seem to fit into any box. Wrap and tie with brightly colored yarn . . . several different colors at the same time!

