

Merry Christmas



"Here is the living tree with no stain of blood upon it, that shall be the sign of your new worship. Let us call it the tree of the Christ Child. You shall go no more into the shadows of the forest to keep your secret rites of shame. You shall keep them at home with laughter and song and rites of love."

This is a statement attributed to St. Boniface, the English-born apostle of Germany who had saved a young child from sacrifice in the early days when Thor was worshipped by the Germanic peoples. The tree the Saint referred to was a young fir, growing nearby.

Such is just one of the many stories connected with the origin of the Christmas tree. The origin of the Christmas tree custom is obscure, notes Dr. Donald Bond, instructor in English at the University of Chicago, for he can quote authorities claiming the Christmas tree's origin in France, Scandinavia, Egypt, England and also Germany.

Only one of all the legends connects the Christ Child with the Christmas tree. This story goes back to the manger at Bethlehem where trees from all over the world had come to do honor to the new born babe. Very little attention was paid to the diminutive fir by the other more beautiful, stately, and majestic trees. Suddenly, though, star upon star fell upon the little fir until it shone with all the brilliance of heavenly light.

A Scandinavian tale of woe traces the Christmas tree to that land. Two star-crossed, unhappy lovers dramatically died. From the spot where they died, it is related, a tree grew which on Christmas night gleamed with brilliant lights.

German immigrants to the United States in 1843 are said to have introduced the decorated Christmas tree. According to claims of historians, the practice of decorating the tree at Christmas time originated in Alsace in 1605. At that time the natives brought fir trees into their homes and decorated them with homemade decorations and sweets.

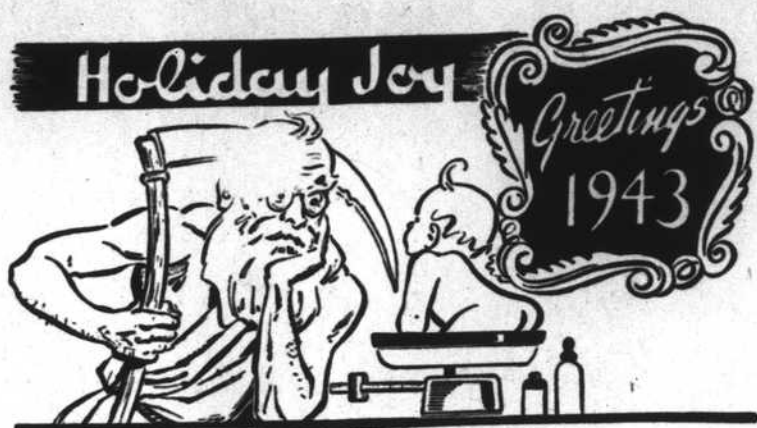
Despite the origin of the Yuletide tree, the sale of trees has developed into an extensive, profitable business. Likewise, tree furnishings becoming an enormous business in itself. From records available, it has been learned that over 111,000,000 electric Christmas tree bulbs were sold in America every year. Possibly the amount will not be as large this year as last, but you can be sure that Americans will have their Christmas tree with decorations and lights on them.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. Where do children receive Christmas gifts from a camel?
2. What famous Christmas character originated in America?
3. If you want a Christmas tree that drops its needles early, what kind would you select?
4. What important event took place on Christmas day almost two thousand years ago?
5. When was Christmas proclaimed a national holiday?
6. Where did the early Christians obtain their Christmas trees?
7. What is the most widely known Christmas story ever written?

ANSWERS To Christmas Quiz

1. Syria. The youngest of the three camels bearing the Wise Men distributes the gifts.
2. Santa Claus. The Dutch brought St. Nicholas (Sint Niklass) to America where he was gradually transformed into Santa Claus.
3. Spruce. The Fir holds its needles the longest.
4. Christ was born.
5. There are no "national holidays" in the United States. The Federal government proclaims holidays only for federal employees.
6. Early Christians didn't have any. Christmas trees weren't used generally until the 16th century.
7. With the exception of the Bible accounts of the birth of Christ, Dickens' "Christmas Carol" is the most widely known Christmas story.



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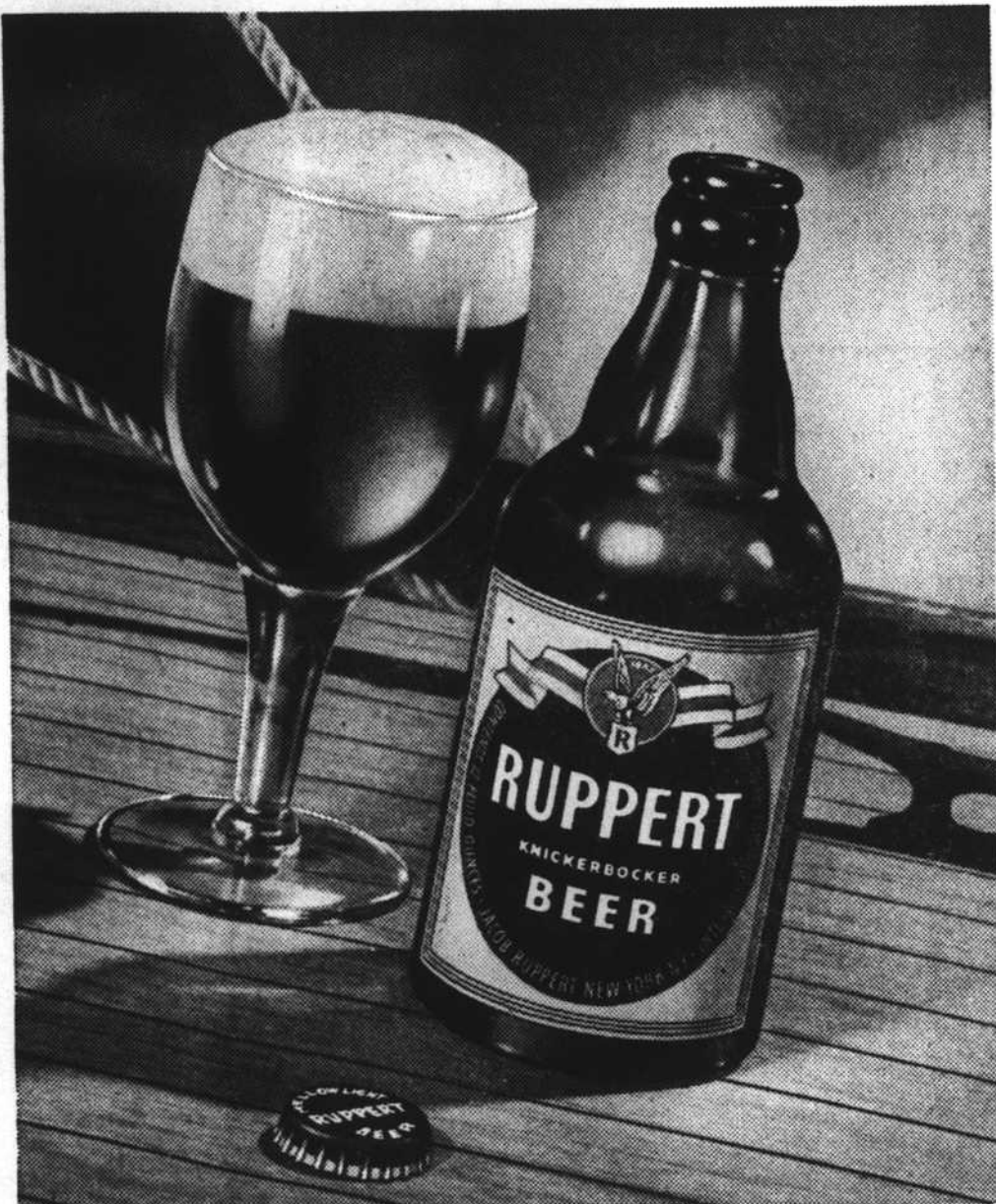
YES, there IS a Santa Claus. There were times during this year of 1942 when we had begun to doubt it, and no doubt YOU had begun to doubt it, but now, when the Christmas spirit steals over the land we know that the Christmas story is true and that Santa Claus will come again, as he has always done. And so, with this cheering thought, we wish you a Merry Christmas.

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Disillusioned Santa Reveals Everything In Last Appearance

PHILADELPHIA, PA.—"I'm tired now. In fact, every year around this time I'm very tired." That is what Santa Claus (a professional one though, for the real one doesn't ever get tired) had to say recently as he was taking off his red and white suit, preparatory to going home.

As he pulled off his white whiskers wearily, he continued: "Besides, this business of being a jolly old fellow is highly seasonal work. Just a couple of weeks' work in Decem-



ber, then something over 11 months' vacation. It is a good thing I am an electrician. I'd possibly starve to death." (The kids should have heard such heresy!)

A few seconds followed while he put on his dark green knit tie before he continued his slightly weary talk: "It was all right at first and the pay was good—\$4 for a party appearance or a club or a lodge. Or \$2 for a private home call. But I guess I can't take it anymore. Anyhow, the kids won't miss me. (Imagine that, the kids not missing Santa Claus!)

Comes next year there will be one ex-Santa who isn't filling stockings, and putting presents under trees, or telling pop to take it easy with son's electric train. That retired Santa will be just sitting in his own home—not, definitely not, at the North Pole—listening to the Christmas carols on the radio, and wiggling his toes. For his shoes will be off.

Christmas Stories Revealed by History

Fortunately, the "idea" in the minds of some to tell the truth to the kiddies—that there isn't a Santa Claus—isn't catching on as well as they hoped.

Everybody—and this includes the kids—enjoys a good story, especially around the Christmas season.

Down through the years have come many beautiful stories, jammed with the kindness of the best in humanity. It is from such stories that many of our Christmas customs have come. For the observance of such customs the United States is indebted to many lands. Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, Italy, Germany, England and Holland all have done their bit to contribute to our added enjoyment of Christmas customs and traditions. To the Holy Land, more than any other, all civilization is indebted for the matchless history of the Christ child.

One writer who has investigated the observance of the birth of the Christ Child has noticed one curious fact. That is, Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church. Irenaeus and Tertullian, early church fathers, omitted it from the list of feasts. According to what Origen noticed in the Bible, only sinners, not saints, celebrated their birthday.

It was in the year 200 A. D. that evidence of the feast of Christmas was first noted. This was in Egypt. And it wasn't until years afterwards that December 25 was decided upon as being the date for the celebration of Christ's birthday. During that time Christmas was celebrated on various days, one of the dates being as late as May 20. Eight hundred years after the first feast of Christmas, church authorities used the term Christes Maessi, from which comes the English word Christmas. This was in 1038.

Ancient Yule Customs Still Live in England

Many ancient customs prevail in England at Christmas, according to present day records. One custom that goes back to Saxon times is still observed at Okehampton, Devon. Here a "market" is held the Sunday after Christmas at which a man may speak to or kiss any girl who takes his fancy. Mistletoe definitely is not necessary.

In the village of Cam on the day after Christmas the poor are again remembered. For, according to the will of Margaret Trotman, one of Cam's former citizens, any parishioner is entitled to the gift of a loaf of bread. Also, the first 50 widows who apply are given money.

Chinese Copy Custom
Chinese children start Christmas day by folding their hands on arising and wishing each other a good day before opening a single gift. The Chinese have adopted American Christmas customs.