

# Carlton Cards Presents the Origins of Christmas Traditions



**Mississauga, Ontario (December 2016)** - It's Christmas—time for trimmed trees, lights, mistletoe, Santa, and of course, greeting cards. Have you ever wondered how these traditions started? Well, a quick trip around the world can answer that!

**Greeting Cards:** Its back to England in 1843 for the first commercial greeting card commissioned by Sir Henry Cole and illustrated by John Callcott Horsley. The card featured a picture of three generations of a family raising a toast to the recipient of the card. Christmas cards are still one of the most honoured traditions in Canada and the perfect way to let family and friends know you are thinking of them during the holiday season.

**Trimming the Tree:** In Germany, fir trees were associated with Christmas nearly 500 years ago and families decorated them with fruit, flowers and candies for the holiday. Prince Albert brought the tree to England when he married Queen Victoria and the tradition spread across Britain. The first Christmas tree in North America appeared on Christmas Eve 1781, in Sorel, Québec, when the baroness Riedesel hosted a party of British and German officers. Fittingly, Quebec Christmas tree farms are among the largest in Canada and in 2015 over one million Christmas trees were exported to countries across the world.

**Christmas Lights:** It's said that Martin Luther, a famous German monk, was inspired by the heavenly stars to add candles to a fir tree. In 1895 Ralph Morris, an American telephonist, invented the first electric Christmas lights, and the rest is history. Many Canadians enjoy taking a wintery evening stroll through their neighbourhood to take in the colours and twinkling lights on homes and to get a peek at spectacular Christmas trees displayed in neighbouring windows.

**Mistletoe:** First used by the Norse as a symbol of peace, warriors would meet under it to reconcile. Other cultures saw it as a sign of fertility, and as a blend of both beliefs, today couples kiss under it.

**Santa Claus:** Most stories link the jolly fellow with St. Nicholas of Myra, (Turkey), who generously gave money and gifts to those in need. St. Nicholas became the patron saint of Russia, but it's Father Frost who visits the children there. In other countries, such as Spain and Mexico, the Three Kings are also givers of gifts. In North America, Santa Claus is portrayed as stout, smiling, white-bearded gentleman outfitted with a red suit with white fur collar and cuffs, and black leather belt and boots. Santa's look was influenced of the 1823 poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas" and of caricaturist and political cartoonist Thomas Nast.

#### About Carlton Cards Ltd.

Carlton Cards Ltd. is a subsidiary of American Greetings with corporate headquarters in Mississauga, Ontario. For over 95 years Carlton Cards Ltd. has been helping consumers enhance their relationships to create happiness, laughter and love. The Company offers seven English speaking brands: Carlton Cards, American Greetings, Papyrus, Recycled Paper Greetings, Gibson, Tender Thoughts and Today and Always as well as three French speaking brands: Entre Nous, Papyrus and Tout en Tendresse. For more information on the Corporation visit <http://www.carltoncards.ca/>

#### About American Greetings Corporation

For more than 100 years, American Greetings Corporation has been a creator and manufacturer of innovative social expression products. Along with greeting cards, its product lines include paper product offerings which include DesignWare party goods and American Greetings and Plus Mark gift-wrap, boxed cards and electronic greetings. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, American Greetings generates annual revenue of approximately \$1.9 billion. For more information on the Company, visit <http://corporate.americangreetings.com/>

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