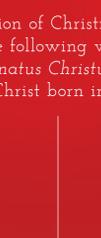


THE TWELVE FIRSTS OF CHRISTMAS

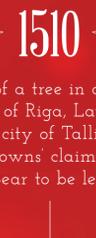


336

First recorded celebration of Christmas. In a church history of Roman bishops, the following words were recorded for A.D. 336: "25 Dec: natus Christus in Betleem Judeae." (December 25th, Christ born in Bethlehem, Judea.)

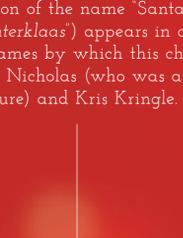
1224

First live nativity scene, created by St. Francis of Assisi in the Italian village of Greccio. Having obtained permission from Pope Honorius III, St. Francis set up a manger with live animals in a cave. The manger was used as an altar for Christmas Mass.



1510

First documented use of a tree in a wintertime Christmas celebration. The town of Riga, Latvia, claims it was the first to do so, but the city of Tallinn, in Estonia, makes the same claim. Both towns' claims are well documented, and appear to be legitimate.



1773

The first mention of the name "Santa Claus" (an Anglicization of "Sinterklaas") appears in a New York City newspaper. Other names by which this character has been known include St. Nicholas (who was a real historical figure) and Kris Kringle.



1822

First mention of Santa's reindeer. In his famous poem, "A Visit From Saint Nicholas" (often called "Twas the Night Before Christmas"), Clement Moore popularized the idea that Santa drove a sleigh pulled by "eight tiny reindeer."



1841

First department store Santa. J.W. Parkinson, proprietor of a dry goods store in Philadelphia, PA, hired his neighbor to impersonate Santa Claus. (And Santa actually arrived through the chimney!)



1843

First commercial Christmas card sent. When Londoner Sir Henry Cole realized he was too busy to write personalized Christmas greetings to his family and friends, he commissioned painter John Callcott Horsley to design a card to send instead.



1931

The introduction of Santa Claus as a jolly man in a red fur suit. The modern Santa, as we know him today, was essentially "invented" by illustrator Haddon Sundblom for a series of Coca-Cola ads for the *Saturday Evening Post*.



1951

First use of the term "Black Friday" to describe the traditional start of the Christmas shopping season, which begins the day after Thanksgiving. Just a decade later, the term was being used derisively because of the commercialized mayhem involved.



1959

First Christmas song to reach #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 Pop Singles Chart. "The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late)" by Ross Bagdasarian and featuring Alvin, Simon, and Theodore is the first and only Christmas song to hit #1.



1962

The first Christmas postage stamp issued by United States Postal Service. Designed by artist Jim Crawford, the stamp was a 4-cent issue, and depicted a Christmas wreath and candles.



1965

The first Christmas carol (or any song, really) to be sung in space. Astronauts Tom Stafford and Wally Schirra sang "Jingle Bells" (which, technically, was written for Thanksgiving) as a joke aboard the spacecraft Gemini 6, accompanied by a harmonica and sleigh bells.