

December 2020

## Happy Holidays From Lobo Internet Services! Here are some interesting Christmas facts

### You can thank Prince Albert for your Christmas tree.

You might want to brew a cup o' tea when decking your halls this year. The origin of Christmas trees goes all the way back to ancient Egyptians and Romans, who marked the winter solstice with evergreens as a reminder that spring would return soon. But it wasn't until Prince Albert of Germany introduced the tree to his new wife, Queen Victoria of England, that the tradition really took off. A drawing of the couple in front of a Christmas tree appeared in Illustrated London News way back in 1848 and as we say today, the idea went viral.

### St. Nick was more generous than jolly.

You probably already knew that the idea of Santa Claus came from St. Nicholas, but the real saint wasn't a bearded man who wore a red suit and had a long, white beard. That all came much later. According to legend, the fourth-century Christian bishop gave away his abundant inheritance to help the needy and rescued women from servitude. As the tale made the rounds, his name became Sinter Klaas in Dutch. That later morphed into Santa Claus, and the rest of the trappings followed.

### Coca-Cola played a huge part in Santa's image.

Craving a Coke yet? Give it a second. According to Coca-Cola, Santa used to look a lot less jolly — even

spooky. Go ahead, Google early images of Santa. We'll wait.

It wasn't until the beverage company hired an illustrator named Haddon Sundblom in 1931 to create images of Santa for magazine advertisements that we got the warm and friendly Santa we know today. Now, kids wouldn't fear interrupting Santa's nightly work.

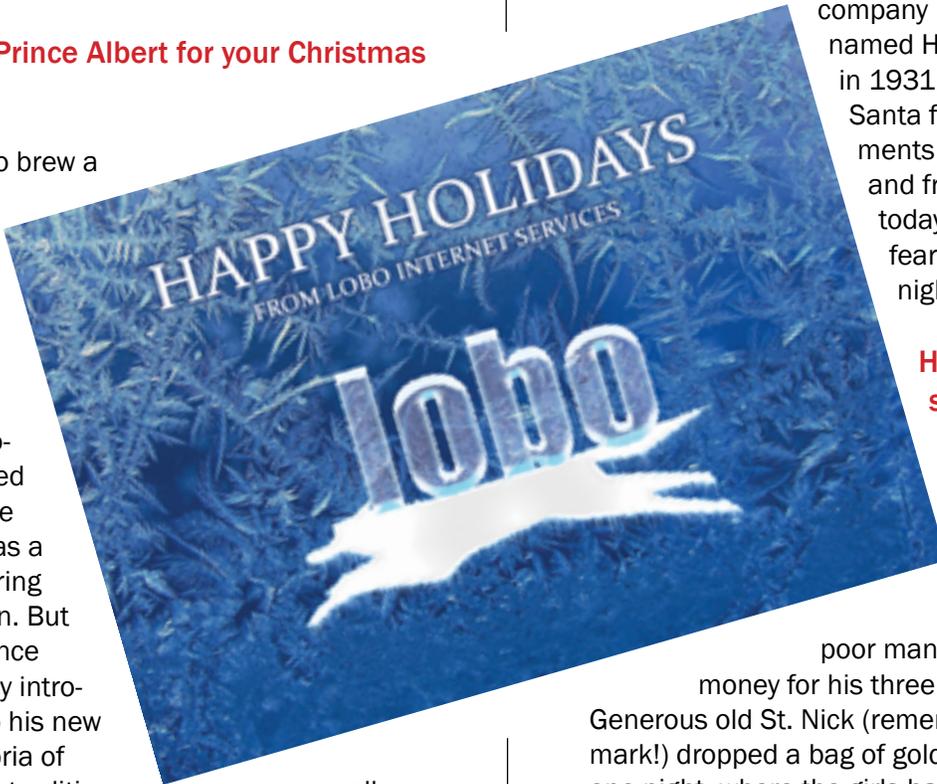
### Hanging stockings started with an accident.

According to legend, we hang out stockings by the chimney with care thanks to a poor man who didn't have the money for his three daughters' dowries. Generous old St. Nick (remember, that's his trademark!) dropped a bag of gold down their chimney one night, where the girls had hung their stockings to dry by the fire. That's where the gold ended up, and allegedly how the tradition began.

"Jingle Bells" was originally a Thanksgiving song. Turns out, we didn't originally go dashing through the snow for just Christmas. James Lord Pierpont wrote a song called "One Horse Open Sleigh" and performed it at his church's Thanksgiving concert originally. Then in 1857, the song was re-published under the title it still holds today, and it eventually became one of the most popular Christmas songs.

### Celebrating Christmas used to be illegal.

By the time the Puritans settled Boston, celebrating Christmas was outlawed. Talk about missing the Christmas spirit! From 1659 to 1681, anyone caught making merry would face a fine for celebrating the once-pagan day. And after the Revolutionary War, the new Congress found the day so unimportant that they even held the first session on December 25, 1789. Christmas wasn't proclaimed a federal holiday for nearly another century, proving



that the Grinch's notorious hatred of the holiday was alive and well long before he was.

## The settlers created the first American batch of eggnog.

The Jamestown settlers created the first American batch of eggnog, although it may not have tasted quite the way the egg-centric concoction does today. The word nog comes from the word grog; that is, any drink made with rum. So technically, an early nog didn't really require the rich, milky base we now recognize on grocery store shelves and ladle out of grandma's cut-crystal punch bowl.

## Christmas decorating sends nearly 15,000 people to the ER.

If you've ever watched Clark Griswold try to decorate his house in Christmas Vacation (or any number of other holiday movie mishaps), that probably doesn't come as much of a surprise. In fact, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 14,700 people visit hospital emergency rooms each November and December from holiday-related decorating accidents. So please, be careful when you're decking the halls.

## Dry Christmas trees spark more than joy.

For the love of Christmas, don't forget to water your live tree. Dried Christmas trees spark about a hundred fires each year, cause an average of 10 deaths, and result in \$15.7 million in property damage, the Consumer Product Safety Commission reports. Not only will an errant spark ruin your holiday, it can put both you and firefighters who respond to the blaze in danger. Are you convinced to switch to an artificial Christmas tree yet?

## We ship a crazy amount of packages around the holidays.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day last year, the U.S. Postal Service delivered an estimated 850 million packages — in addition to 15 billion pieces of mail. That's including gifts for faraway loved ones, heartfelt cards, letters to Santa, and those dreaded credit card statements after we gleefully charge all of our holiday purchases (oops). So cut your mail carrier

some slack; they're really pulling double duty this time of year.

## The term "Xmas" dates back to the 1500s.

Think "Xmas" is an edgy, relatively new way to abbreviate Christmas, or a secular attempt to take the Christ out of Christmas? Think again. According to From Adam's Apple to Xmas: An Essential Vocabulary Guide for the Politically Correct, the word "Christianity" was spelled "Xianity" as far back as 1100. X, or Chi, in Greek is the first letter of "Christ" and served as a symbolic stand-in. In 1551, the holiday was called "Xtemmas" but eventually shortened to "Xmas." So really, Xmas is just as Christian as the longer version.

## About 90% of Americans celebrate Christmas.

It may feel like Christmas is everywhere from October (or earlier!) right on through New Year's, and that's because most Americans like to jingle bell rock their way right through the season. In addition, the Pew Research Center's findings found that fewer people think of Christmas as a religious holiday nowadays. Only 51% of those people who celebrate attend church on Christmas. They don't say how many of those people make that their twice-annual appearance.

## Americans spend nearly \$1,000 on gifts.

According to the National Retail Federation's findings in 2017, consumers say they'll spend \$967.13 for the holidays on average, although individual spending can vary widely. In 2018, total retail sales in November and December hit \$717.45 billion, a truly startling number. Homemade Christmas gifts, anyone?

## This Christmas gift held a lifesaving secret.

During World War II, The United States Playing Card Company joined forces with American and British intelligence agencies to create a very special deck of cards. They gave out the cards as Christmas gifts to help allied prisoners of war escape from German POW camps. Individual cards peeled apart when moistened, to reveal maps of escape routes.