

A Christmas card history

The first Christmas cards were prepared by children and were called Christmas pieces. They were colored sheets of paper with pictures around the border and a space left in the middle for the children to wish their parents a Merry Christmas.

The Christmas card as we know it came about with the creation of penny postage in England in 1840. With the cheap rate of postage it was now possible to send greetings to a number of friends and relatives without having to pay a lot of money.

Another innovation that helped promote Christmas cards was the invention of the steam printing press. Printers could now print more pieces than ever before and were eager for business.

The credit for designing the first Christmas card was given to Sir Henry Cole in 1846. It consisted of three panels. One showed a family drinking a toast to the holiday season

and the other two depicted good works such as feeding and clothing the poor. This was the beginning of a new tradition. Approximately one thousand copies of the card were printed and sold that first year.

Today Christmas cards have become part of big business. More than a billion are sold every year. Many people use Christmas cards as a way to keep in contact with old friends who they rarely see. Often, a letter giving the news of the family for the past year, is included.

Generally when cards are received they are displayed as part of the Christmas decorations to help create a festive atmosphere in keeping with the season.

In Canada, some of the finest cards were produced in 1931. The artist A.Y. Jackson convinced William E. Coumts, the Toronto greeting card magnate to create a series of cards in typical Canadian

style. Twenty-six artists were paid \$25 apiece for each design. The cards were considered an artistic success. These cards are treasured by collectors. Three of them were reproduced on Christmas Postage stamps issued in 1980.

The card reproduced on the 15c stamp is called "Christmas Morning" by Charles Hennessey. A group of people from a village in the Gatineau are pictured on their way to Christmas services.

The .17c stamp by Joseph Sydney Hallam features one of the most enjoyable winter pastimes and is entitled "Sleigh Ride".

The original Christmas Card reproduced on the .35c stamp is by Kathleen Morris of Montreal. The scene pictured on the card is called "Mill Cab Stand", a nostalgic view of old Montreal in winter.

This information was provided by Canada Post.



Have a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!