

## Yule Riddle Links Santa, Pawnshops

What is the connection between Santa Claus, the custom of hanging up Christmas stockings, and a pawnbroker's sign of three gold-colored balls?

A Scrooge might say that the answer to the Yuletide riddle is that Santa Claus would need help from a pawnbroker, to pay for filling all the stockings — but Scrooge would be wrong.

Both Christmas stockings and pawnbrokers' signs are traditions that come from legends about the first "Santa Claus" — St. Nicholas bishop of Myra, in Asia Minor — according to the Encyclopedia Americana.

This early Santa was known far and wide for his generosity. And, so the story goes, he wanted to help a merchant who had lost all his money and had no way to provide dowries for the marriages of his three daughters.

Like Santa today, St. Nicholas wanted to be a generous but secret giver. When the oldest daughter was old enough to marry, he went at night to the merchant's house, with a bag of gold.

Some legends say he threw it through the window, and others that he threw it down the chimney. At any rate, the oldest daughter had her dowry and was able to marry. St. Nicholas repeated the process for the second, and then the third, daughter. The third time, the merchant watched to see who brought the gold and told the story of the good saint's generosity.

According to legend, one bag of gold fell into a stocking hung by the chimney to dry, and thus began the custom of hanging up stockings to be filled with gifts.

Pictures of the saint show him with the three bags of gold.

Bankers in Northern Italy took him as their patron and used the sign of three gold balls. Because bankers lent money, the sign later became associated with pawnbrokers, and today this custom still continues.

### Gigantic Tree

A shopping center near Seattle, Washington attracted plenty of attention by erecting a 212-foot Christmas tree. Trimming the tree required some 3,500 colored light bulbs—and the aid of a helicopter.



**MIXED REACTIONS . . .** The young lady seems pleased but the reaction of her young gentleman friend is a bit different. He isn't quite sure of his opinion regarding the new boy dolls on the holiday market this year as companion to more familiar girl-type dolls. "Well-I-I . . . if you like dolls. . . ."

## Many Uses Found for Frankincense and Myrrh

Gold has always been one of man's most treasured possessions; but what about frankincense and myrrh, the other substances which the Wise Men chose to offer as gifts to the infant Jesus? Why were they so highly valued?

Frankincense and myrrh are resins taken from trees and shrubs found on the dry rock-strewn hills of Somaliland and southwestern Arabia. Peoples of antiquity used the two substances for a variety of purposes—for embalming and in cosmetics, perfumes, medicines and incense.

### Frankincense

Somaliland is chief producer of frankincense, although some comes

from Arabia. Most frankincense comes from a small shrub-like tree with a stout trunk and pale brown and yellow bark. Its flowers are grouped in slender clusters and the fragrance of the blossoms is discernable for a considerable distance.

The resin flows from natural fissures in the bark of the tree, or from man-made incisions. It emerges as a whitish, viscous liquid that turns yellow and clings to the wound in the tree like tears. Every few days the resin is collected and the wound in the tree is freshened.

Ancient Arab traders introduced frankincense to many peoples. Today, the yellow tears and brown lumps of resin are sent to the seaport of Aden to be shipped to Europe, America or Bombay.

### Myrrh From Somaliland

Myrrh is obtained from trees of several species and most of it comes from Somaliland. Some of the trees are from ten to thirty feet tall, other myrrh-producing plants are mere bushes.

Myrrh flows freely from a break in the bark of the tree or plant and is collected in brownish-yellow or red brown masses that may be as large as a hen's egg.

The ancients used myrrh in embalming; the Egyptians used it in the mummification process and Roman physicians prescribed myrrh in treatment of dropsy, earache, eye diseases, bladder stones, abscesses and broken heads.

Frankincense was chiefly used for incense, yet was an early ingredient in prescriptions for chest pain, hemorrhoids, hemorrhages from the mouth and throat, broken heads, paralyzed limbs, bruises and ulcers.

### Towns Named in Spirit of Christmas Get Mail Deluge

Among the busiest of Santa's helpers at the Yuletide seasons are postoffices in towns with Christmas names.

In Noel, Mo.; Christmas, Fla.; Santa Claus, Ind.; Bethlehem, Ind.; and Bethlehem, Pa., many thousands of packages and cards are received around Christmas time, to be postmarked with the Yule town's name and remailed to other states and countries.

The town also play host to many visitors during the Christmas season. In Bethlehem and Nazareth, Pa., there are permanent displays and festivals of light, emphasizing the religious meaning and beauty of Christmas.



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**NOEL**

As Yuletide carolers herald the Season of Joy and Happiness, may we chime in with a note of gratitude for the loyal patronage of our many friends.

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