

Christmas card tradition goes back 150 years

Christmas is always a time for caring and sharing. And, as this year's Yuletide season draws closer, many Canadians will seek new ways to give and help others.

According to Regal Greetings & Gifts, catalogue distributor of greeting cards to Canadians for 65 years, many will consider buying charitable Christmas cards this year, in the hope that the money they spend will help others less fortunate.

Since 1843, the most traditional way of giving and receiving seasonal greetings has been through the Christmas card. This 150 year tradition has weathered everything from war and famine to political turmoil and economic recession. In fact, last year alone an estimated 200 million Christmas cards were distributed across Canada. Sociologists tell us the constant need to stay in touch with family and friends far exceeds any other reason for the popularity of this custom.

Over the years, the Christmas card has shared messages of joy and happiness among family and friends all over

the world. This year, Regal Greetings & Gifts has compiled the following facts in tribute to the 150 year-old tradition:

- * The first Christmas card can be traced to the romantic Victorian era of the mid-1800s. The idea was created in 1843 by London businessman Henry Cole and was designed and illustrated by English artist John Calcott Horsley. Cole's idea of Christmas greeting cards originated after an English postal reform was passed, making it possible for people to send mail for only a penny. The original card design portrayed two of the most charitable traditions associated with Christmas-feeding the hungry and clothing the needy. The first Christmas card read, "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You."

- * Sending and receiving Christmas cards has become an established ritual among family, friends and business associates during the Holidays.

- * A variation of the original greeting, "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year," remains the most popular

Christmas message. Over the years, many other greetings have emerged including "Season's Greetings," "Peace on Earth," and traditional religious verses.

- * Since the first card was created in 1843, designs have often reflected popular culture and trends of the time. For instance, over the years, Christmas card designs have displayed Old Master art depicting religious and seasonal scenes, Victorian and Edwardian-retro designs, even famous scenic Canadian art.

- * Novelty Christmas cards have also been introduced in the past including seasonal melody greetings, three-dimensional pop-up cards and greetings from favorite cartoon and television characters.

- * As consumers increase their focus on at-home traditions, family and spiritual values, contemporary card designs reflect a renewed interest in traditional

themes - trees, wreaths, and wintery scenes.

- * One of the most popular trends this Holiday season is the charity card. These cards, produced by or on behalf of charitable organizations, are sold to help support charitable projects and institutions.

- * According to Regal Greetings & Gifts, charitable Christmas card sales have increased over the past few years. Research has shown that Canadian consumers and corporations have chosen to send Season's Greetings that also help support a charitable organization.

- * Since the average Canadian household sends an estimated 37 Christmas cards during the holiday season, many will notice that a good number of Christmas cards they receive will help benefit a charity.

- * This year, Regal Greetings & Gifts is offering two distinctive Christmas card

designs on behalf of two important charities: The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and The Lung Association. For the sixth consecutive year, Regal and The CNIB have created a series of bilingual cards (English and braille). Proceeds go to help support special children's projects across Canada. New for '93, Regal is proud to carry a line of Christmas cards for The Lung Association. Each packaged set contains four each of five adorable designs as well as a set of The Lung Association's 1993 special Christmas seals.

Although the themes, greetings and designs of Christmas cards have evolved over the years, the meaning behind sending a Holiday message has not - Christmas cards remain a special and timeless way to stay in touch with loved ones or to reach out to those less fortunate, during the most celebrated holiday of the year.

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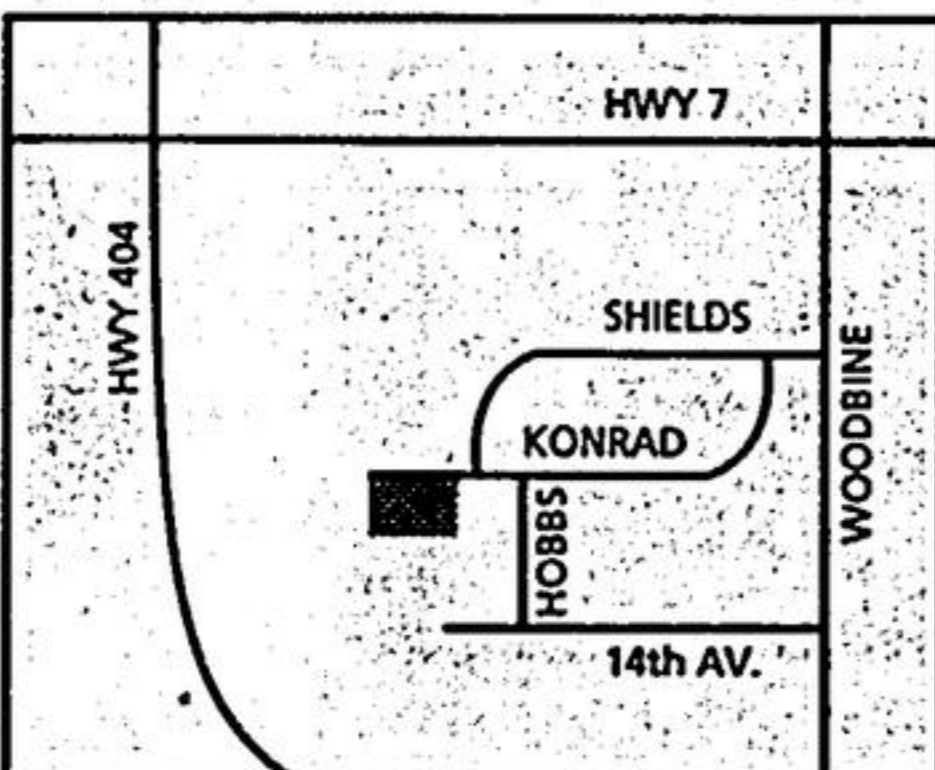
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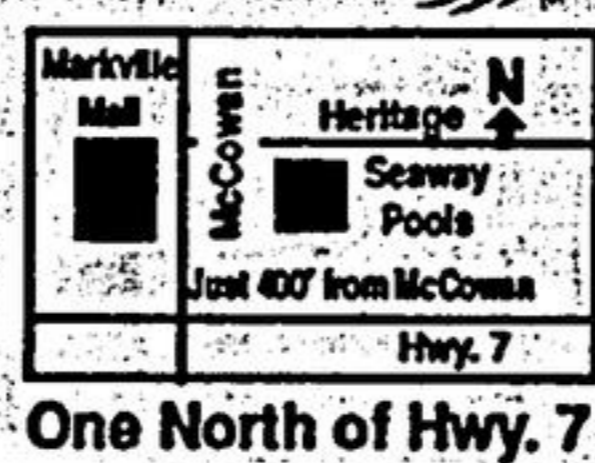


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