

Identifying the Inventor of the Modern Santa Claus

Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas! Wait! Santa Claus was invented? Since the beginning of time, I always thought Santa Claus really existed. I mean, how could everyone know and believe in a jolly old man who rides in a sleigh driven by reindeer giving gifts to children?

That is because not everyone saw Santa Claus this way. Our modern day Santa Claus does not resemble his early years. He transformed into what we, Americans, now refer to as Santa Claus; the word derived from a combination of nationality versions, such as Christkindle and Sinterklass. Martin Luther attempted to abolish worshipping of saints, but the want to give presents held strong. Because of Luther's attempt, Germany's Christkindle - Christ Child replaced St. Nicholas, the saint of gifts forming the American word Kris Kringle. When the Dutch settled in the New World, they brought with them, [Sinterklass](#), shortened for Sinter Nikolaas, which we then changed to Santa Claus.

In 1624, the [Dutch](#) settled in New Amsterdam in the New World continuing to observe Saint Nicholas Day on December 5. Then in 1644, the British took control of New Amsterdam renaming it New York and joining in with their gift giver, Father Christmas. After the American Revolution in 1783, both of these Christmas figures mixed forming the early American version of Santa Claus.

In the early 1800's, a man by the name of Washington Irving described the image he had of Santa Claus in a satire of New York. Legend has it that the Dutch had a figure of Saint Nicholas on the prow of their ship showing him with a pipe, and a wide brimmed hat. His image along with the Dutch ship description drew out Irving's idea of a chubby, jolly man led by reindeers. Inspired by Washington Irving, Dr. Clement Moore, whose famous poem TwasThe Night Before Christmas gave Santa Claus eight named reindeers along with his entrance into homes through the chimney. During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln asked Thomas Nast to draw pictures of Santa meeting Union soldiers to uplift them and discourage the Confederate soldiers. Some people believe Nast was responsible for creating the modern day Santa bringing the image from elf to a fat, jolly man. Still, Thomas Nast had not created a consistent Santa Claus.

Most claim it was not until the 1900's when Santa Claus received an identifiable look that lasted until today. The 30's were a trying time for the country and that went for United States companies. [Coca Cola](#) experienced a slowdown in sales during the winter months, so they hired a commercial illustrator, Haddon Sundblom for their advertisements. His drawings were captivating. Since this came before color television and other color media, Coca Cola's Santa Claus holding a Coca Cola bottle on billboards and store displays gave Coca Cola the recognition in establishing our modern day Santa Claus.

Although Coca Cola played a huge role in creating the Americanized Santa Claus that we all know and love, actually Haddon Sundblom, they were not the inventors. Credit goes to all those who contributed way before Coca Cola in transforming the elf/bishop/girl into a jolly old man with eight reindeers. Nevertheless, no matter what traditions you follow, or how you picture Santa Claus, the story is mostly the same, a happy, old man delivering toys to children.