

(Mobile book) Merry Christmas!: A History of the Holiday

Merry Christmas!: A History of the Holiday

Patricia Bunning Stevens

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Patricia Bunning Stevens : Merry Christmas!: A History of the Holiday before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Merry Christmas!: A History of the Holiday:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Merry Christmas - A History of The HolidayBy Rich FriesenhengstThis is an excellent book on the growth, changes, development of the Christmas Holiday, covering all aspects including religions, food, the decline and rebirth due to Prince Albert (Queen Victoria) and Charles Dickens, music, plants, and dates. Had a copy, but it was lost in a fire, so was glad to replace it with another. Highly recommended.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerExcellent!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A BRIEF BUT ENGAGING STORY OF CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONSBy Steven H ProppAt the time this book was published in 1979, Patricia Bunning Stevens taught at Du Sable High School in Chicago, and was also the author of God Save Ireland! The Irish Conflict in the Twentieth Century. and Rare Bits: Unusual Origins Of Popular Recipes.She observes, "The Christians... hoped to placate the worshippers of the sun god. A festival occurring on the day most sacred to Mithra might provide a bridge over which the followers of the sun god could cross... The trouble with building bridges, of course, is that traffic tends to go both ways. For the next century or two, Christian preachers found themselves having to remind their listeners firmly that it was Christ's birthday they were supposed to be celebrating, not Mithra's." (Pg. 41)She asserts, "Fire was particularly important to the peoples of northern Europe. The hearth had its own goddess, Berchta... She gained a Christian name, Befana... Often, when pagan customs blend with Christian feasts, fanciful legends arise to provide Christian explanations for the old practices. So it is with Befana... How did this great saint of the Middle Ages [St. Nicholas]

come to take on Berchta's role? Legends linking Nicholas with children undoubtedly had much to do with it... St. Nicholas's feast day came in December. Berchta's annual pilgrimage occurred in the same month. Gradually, as so often happened in newly Christian Europe, the identities became fused and Nicholas came to assume Berchta's functions." (Pg. 73-79)She states, "It was in the period just after the American Revolution that Nicholas came into his own in New York... [John Pintard] must be credited with interesting New Yorkers of all nationalities in the early Dutch 'Sinter Claes' (Sint meaning 'saint,' Claes, a shortened form of 'Nicholas'). Patiently he gathered together the few remaining traditions about the saint... Pintard's Sancte Claus was still dressed as a bishop, and still brought switches as well as gifts... St. Nicholas's American following was further encouraged by the author Washington Irving... Irving's Nicholas is... a sturdy Dutchman... Irving introduced St. Nicholas to many Americans who had never heard of him before, and prompted a new wave of interest in him." (Pg. 83)Later, she adds, "[Thomas] Nast's first drawing of Santa Claus ... was clearly based on [Clement Clark] Moore's... But Nast added details of his own, like the North Pole workshops where the toys were built, and a great book in which all children's names were recorded, along with notes on their behavior." (Pg. 87)She recounts, "In the havoc and destruction caused by World War II, Santa was all but forgotten. But after the war he reappeared in western Europe. Often he was introduced exuberantly by United States soldiers who provided Christmas parties for children in countless villages and towns. The kindness of the American GI made Santa known and loved everywhere..." (Pg. 89)This is an interesting "popular" account of many popular Christmas customs, and the history behind them.

Traces the history and development of the Christmas holiday from ancient pagan festivals to contemporary American celebrations.