

0. A VISIT FROM SAINT NICHOLAS - Story Preface

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This 1899 image depicts how Santa Claus was perceived in America by the end of the nineteenth century. Clement Moore wrote a much-loved poem "A Visit from Saint Nicholas"—now known as "*The Night Before Christmas*"—on Christmas Eve, 1822.

A gift for his six children, it was the first time anyone described Saint Nicholas as fat and jolly. (Moore probably derived the description from other literary works referring to Dutch merchants in those terms.)

It wasn't the first time a reindeer was part of the Santa Claus story, though. That occurred a year earlier, in a poem called *The Children's Friend*. Expanding the number of reindeer from one to eight, Moore also gave them names.

About 40 years after *A Visit From St. Nicholas* was published, Thomas Nast used Moore's "fat and jolly" description to help create the familiar Santa Claus of today. As an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*, Nast created numerous *Christmas Drawings*.

His most-famous depicts St. Nick with a rotund belly while his first, from 1863, shows Santa siding with the Union Army. *That* drawing, requested by President Lincoln, demoralized the Confederates.

Harper's Weekly published this print of a Thomas Nast engraving, circa 1889, entitled "Christmas Station." It features a sign on the chimney: "Santa Claus Stop Here Please."



CHRISTMAS STATION.

Nast's engravings depict children calling, or mailing, their mounting requests to a Santa who tries to please. Instead of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint **of** children, we now have Saint Nicholas, the patron saint **for** children.

Clement Moore and Thomas Nast, particularly, helped to create that fundamental transition. One can only wonder what the **real** Saint Nicholas would make of his gift-giving legend today.

And ... one can only imagine what Dorey Walker would have said in *Miracle on 34th Street* had **she** known what you now know!

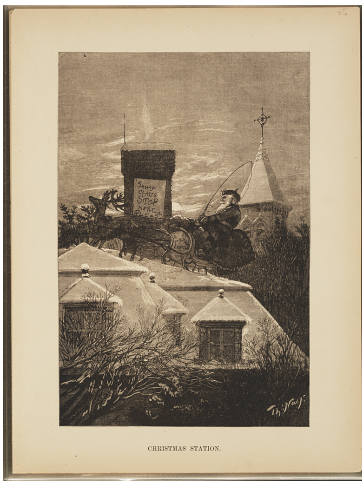
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-VISIT-FROM-SAINT-NICHOLAS-Santa-Claus>

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Media Stream



Santa Please Stop Here

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Santa Claus in Camp - by Thomas Nast

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

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Calling Santa Claus - by Thomas Nast

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Requests to Santa Claus - by Thomas Nast

Image from The Christmas Visions of Thomas Nast at the unmuseum.org website.

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Santa Claus Tries to Please - by Harper's Weekly

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