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The Claus That Refreshes

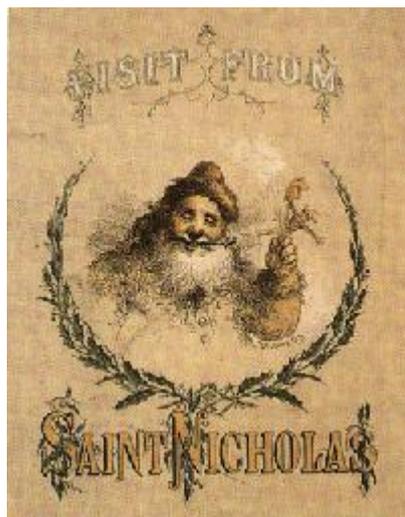
Claim: The modern image of Santa Claus — a jolly figure in a red-and-white suit — was created by Coca-Cola.

The jolly old St. Nick that we know from countless images did not come from folklore, nor did he originate in the imaginations of Moore and Nast. He comes from the yearly advertisements of the Coca-Cola Company. He wears the corporate colors — the famous red and white — for a reason: he is working out of Atlanta, not out of the North Pole.

Origins: Santa

Claus is perhaps the most remarkable of all the figures with Christmas. To us, Santa has always been an essential Christmas celebration, but the modern image of Santa develop until well into the 19th century. Moreover, he didn't sprig fully-formed as a literary creation or a commercial invention (as famous reindeer, [Rudolph](#)). Santa Claus was an evolutionary creation brought about by the fusion of two religious personages (St. Nicholas Christkindlein, the Christ child) to become a fixed image which is paramount symbol of the *secular* Christmas celebration.

In 1804, the New York Historical Society was founded with Nicholas patron saint, its members reviving tradition of St. Nicholas as a gift-bringer



1809, Washington Irving published *A History of New York*, by one "Dieck Knickerbocker," a work that poked fun at New York's Dutch past (St. Nicholas included). Irving became a member of the Society following year, the annual St. Nicholas dinner festivities included a wooden traditional Nicholas figure (tall, with robes) accompanied by a Dutch rhyme "Sancte Claus" (in Dutch, "Sinterklaas"). Irving revised his *History of New York* in 1814, adding details about Nicholas' "riding over the trees, in that selfsame waggon which brings his yearly presents to children."

In 1822, a New York printer named William Gilley issued a poem about a "Sante," who dressed all in fur and drove a sleigh pulled by one reindeer. "Sante," however, was very short.

On Christmas Eve of 1822, another New Yorker, Clement Clarke Moore wrote down and read to his children a series of verses; his poem

published a year later as "An Account from St. Nicholas" (more commonly known today by its opening line, "'Twas the night before Christmas...")

