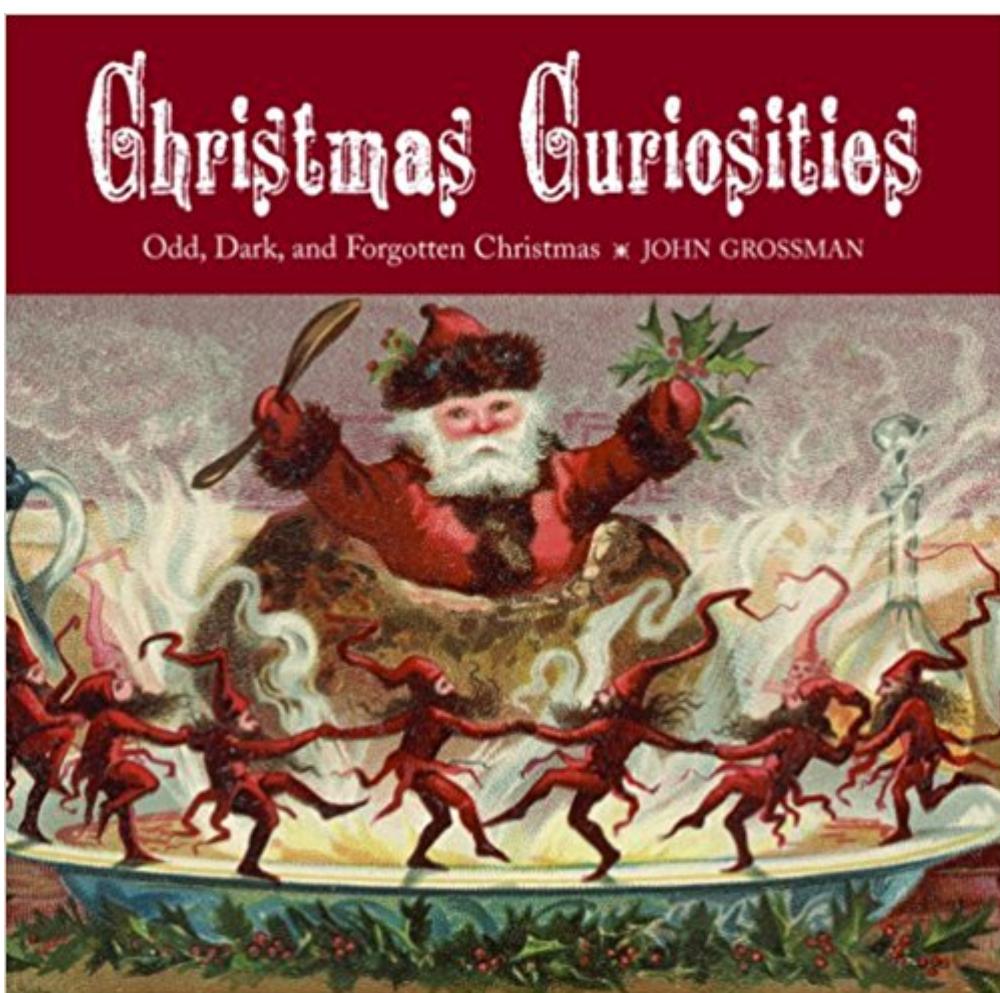


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Christmas Curiosities: Odd, Dark, And Forgotten Christmas



Synopsis

Oh, by gosh, by golly. It's time for . . . rowdy bands of drunkards roaming the streets, lighting firecrackers, and firing off guns? Gangs of masked youths invading people's houses, demanding food, drink, and money; and threatening to break the windows (or worse) unless they're given what they want? Welcome to Christmas, circa 1800. Yes, the season of light, joy, and gift-giving was once regarded as a time of darkness, danger, and dissipation; and celebrated with all-too-public displays of noisemaking, inebriation, and gluttonous overeating. (Well, maybe not everything has changed.) And though we tend to imagine Victorian-era Christmases as sentimental gatherings around the candlelit tree, blazing hearth, and festive punchbowl, the 19th-century evidence tells us quite otherwise. Drawing from his extensive collection of antique postcards, greeting cards, advertising giveaways, and other ephemera, author John Grossman presents a picture of Christmas past that, frankly, looks a lot more like Halloween. Broomstick-riding witches and vampire bat-borne cupids deliver New Year's greetings. Fur-clad fairies gather around a campfire to roast their Christmas dinner; a huge dead rat. And Saint Nicholas? He's that skinny guy in the bishop robes who arrives with his dark companion, the Devil-like Krampus brandishing switches to punish the badly behaved. With Christmas Curiosities, STC wishes you a very merry, very scary Christmas.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Grossman is the owner of one of the world's largest collections of museum-quality artifacts and ephemera from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. He is the co-author of *A Victorian Scrapbook*, *Joy to the World*, *A Victorian Christmas*, and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, all published by Workman. *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* has subsequently been republished by Castle Books.

I had heard some of this, but I'd never heard that the Santa gift-giving tradition may have started with the Vikings! This book is an easy read and it's divided into small sections that can be read and left until next time. Each of the illustrations is well annotated and they provide the texture to the historical info that's given in the prose. I think this is a clever, well-crafted little gem that should be on the bookshelf of anyone who's ever wondered, "So what is all this Santa stuff about anyway?"

It's a very interesting read. Not long on text, the book consists mostly of reproductions from Victorian postcards that give a snapshot of various periods in the history of Christmas. Due to the nature of postcard printing (and the author's collection), the focus is primarily that of northern Europe and America; there's little of the Southern European "Nativity" tradition represented here, but it's still a fascinating look into the collective psyche of a holiday. My only quibble is the book's relatively small dimensions (about 8" by 8" square); it would have benefited from a much larger scale to be a proper coffee table book.

Great historical insights into traditions. A nice 'chaser' after some of the more saccharine ads and programs. ;)

Goes where most Christmas books don't go. Some of the stuff might be a little overdone to make it interesting and strange but it is well worth reading and has added little known facts to my various Christmas History presentations I do before clubs and groups.

I have been an antique postcard collector for 25 years and am delighted with the Christmas post card and trade card images in this book. This would be an ideal gift for anyone who loves Christmas and/or who enjoys learning about holiday traditions. The book reflects a lot of research and provides rare images of the Christmas season in a form that is eclectic and beautiful. I'm so delighted with this and may be back for other copies to give as gifts. Thanks!

enjoyed the heck outta this book. came quick and it was incredible to read of the different areas/cultures celebration of the christmas season. highly recomended

Great book....love the Kampus info and other fun unusual info on historical Xmas.

Received quickly and properly as described

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