

THE WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
CHRISTMAS

GERRY BOWLER



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Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Bowler, Gerald, 1948-

The world encyclopedia of Christmas

ISBN 0-7710-1531-3

1. Christmas – Encyclopedias. I. Title.

GT4985.B68 2000 394.2663'03 C00-931247-1

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program for our publishing activities. We further acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council for our publishing program.

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Design by Sari Ginsberg
Typeset in Minion by M&S, Toronto
Printed and bound in Canada

McClelland & Stewart Ltd.
The Canadian Publishers
481 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2E9
www.mcclelland.com

1 2 3 4 5 03 02 01 00



Goose Goose clubs like the one in operation here were a way of saving for Christmas necessities in 19th-century England.

such as frumenty, *Jólagrautur*, and *kutya*, appear at Christmas all over Europe.

Grandfather Frost The Soviet version of Santa Claus – meant to replace Father Christmas, or *Kolyáda*, at Christmas and



Grandfather Frost This Canadian stamp shows the Russian gift-bringer Grandfather Frost, also known as *Ded Moroz*.

Baboushka at Epiphany – Grandfather Frost (“*Ded Moroz*”) was depicted as an elderly white-bearded man in a long coat and winter furs. As part of the Communist campaign against the old religion and all its customs, Grandfather Frost was said to bring presents at New Year’s. He was accompanied on his rounds by an attractive young woman, alleged to be his niece, called *Snegurochka*, the Snow Maiden. His survival in the post-Communist world is still uncertain.

In Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, attempts by officials to eradicate the Christmas legends of local gift-bringers was met with resistance, and Grandfather Frost was perceived as a symbol of Russian oppression.

“Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer” A novelty song written in 1979 by veterinarian Elmo Shropshire and popularized by Elmo and Patsy. In it Grandma, who had been drinking too much eggnog, is found dead under circumstances that suggest she has been hit by Santa’s sleigh. The song achieved notoriety in Canada when complaints were lodged with politicians, women’s groups, and seniors’ organizations that it was offensive to elderly women and that the death of a matriarch was no laughing matter. Though nothing was done to limit its airplay, the song was voted one of the “Three Most Dreaded Christmas Songs Ever” and an American disc jockey was fired for playing it (by request) 27 times in a row. A parody followed entitled “Grandpa Got Run Over by a John Deere.”

“A Great and Mighty Wonder” J.M. Neale’s translation of St. Germanus’s (634-733) liturgical hymn for Christmas Day. The melody can be traced to a Christmas or Twelfth Night folk carol from the diocese of Trier in the 15th or early 16th century.

A great and mighty wonder,
A full and holy cure!