



# December News 2011



## Brentwood Academy News



### Seasons Greetings

10:30 Monday, December 19-Children's holiday party- Goodies Appreciated

Interims Distributed- Friday December 16

School Closed Monday, December 26  
School Closed- Monday, January 2

### HAPPY HANUKKAH



## Blue Bird Day school News



10:30 Tuesday, December 20-Children's holiday party-Goodies Appreciated

School Closed- Monday, December 26

School Closed- Monday, January 2

## Tiny Tots Playroom News



10:30 Thursday, December 22-Children's holiday party-Goodies Appreciated Early

School Closed- Monday, December 26

School Closed- Monday, January 2



### Holiday Reflection

It's that time of year again. The time of year when people are full of joy and good cheer. The time of year when you can not find a parking spot at your local mall or retail store. The time of year when people are pushing and shoving to get that last item that they just can not 'live with out.' Oh wait a minute, the holidays are supposed to be a happy time, but with the demands and stresses, it's hard to stay 'happy.' I know there have been years when I have wanted to crawl into a closet and stay there until the whole thing was over. The holidays have become so commercialized I think a lot of individuals have forgotten the true meaning of the holiday we are celebrating. Most kids today, and some adults, are worried about the number of gifts they receive, not the meaning behind them or the person that gave it to them.

With everything that has happened this year, maybe we need to take a step back and retrace the heritage of the holiday we celebrate and maybe even learn about the holiday our neighbors celebrate. Instead of buying that expensive gift for your loved ones, sit down with them, talk about the holiday, its meaning and maybe even play some traditional holiday games.

## Blue Bird of Alexandria News



10:30 Wednesday, December 21-Children's holiday party-Goodies Appreciated

Interims distributed- Friday December 16

School Closed- Monday, December 26

School Closed- Monday, January 2



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# History Of Santa Claus

The American version of the Santa Claus figure received its inspiration and its name from the Dutch legend of Sinter Klaas, brought by settlers to New York in the 17th century.

As early as 1773 the name appeared in the American press as "St. A Claus," but it was the popular author Washington Irving who gave Americans their first detailed information about the Dutch version of Saint Nicholas. In his *History of New York*, published in 1809 under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, Irving described the arrival of the saint on horseback (unaccompanied by Black Peter) each Eve of Saint Nicholas. This Dutch-American Saint Nick achieved his fully Americanized form in 1823 in the poem *A Visit From Saint Nicholas* more commonly known as *The Night Before Christmas* by writer Clement Clarke Moore. Moore included such details as the names of the reindeer; Santa Claus's laughs, winks, and nods; and the method by which Saint Nicholas, referred to as an elf, returns up the chimney. (Moore's phrase "lays his finger aside of his nose" was drawn directly from Irving's 1809 description.) The American image of Santa Claus was further



elaborated by illustrator Thomas Nast, who depicted a rotund Santa for Christmas issues of Harper's magazine from the 1860s to the 1880s. Nast added such details as Santa's workshop at the North Pole and Santa's list of the good and bad children of the world. A human-sized version of Santa Claus, rather than the elf of Moore's poem, was depicted in a series of illustrations for Coca-Cola advertisements introduced in 1931 that introduced and made the red Santa Suits an icon. In modern versions of the Santa Claus legend, only his toy-shop workers are elves. Rudolph, the ninth reindeer, with a red and shiny nose, was invented in 1939 by an advertising writer for the Montgomery Ward Company. In looking for the historical roots of Santa Claus, one must go very deep in the past. One discovers that Santa Claus as we know him is a combination of many different legends and mythical creatures. The basis for the Christian-era Santa Claus is Bishop Nicholas of Smyrna (Izmir), in what is now Turkey. Nicholas lived in the 4th century A.D. He was very rich, generous, and loving toward children. Often he gave joy to poor children by throwing gifts in through their windows. The Orthodox Church later raised St. Nicholas, miracle worker, to a position of great esteem. It was in his honor that Russia's oldest church, for example, was built. For its part, the Roman Catholic Church honored Nicholas as one who helped children and the poor. St. Nicholas became the patron saint of children and seafarers. His name day is December 6th. In the Protestant areas of central and northern Germany, St. Nicholas later became known as *der Weihnachtsmann*. In England he came to be called *Father Christmas*. St. Nicholas made his way to the United States with Dutch immigrants, and began to be referred to as Santa Claus. In North American poetry and illustrations, Santa Claus, in his white beard, red jacket and pompom-topped cap, would sally forth on the night before Christmas in his sleigh, pulled by eight reindeer, and climb down chimneys to leave his Christmas gifts in stockings children set out on the fireplace's mantelpiece. Children naturally wanted to know where Santa Claus actually came from. Where did he live when he wasn't delivering presents? Those questions gave rise to the legend that Santa Claus lived at the North Pole, where his Christmas-gift workshop was also located. In 1925, since grazing reindeer

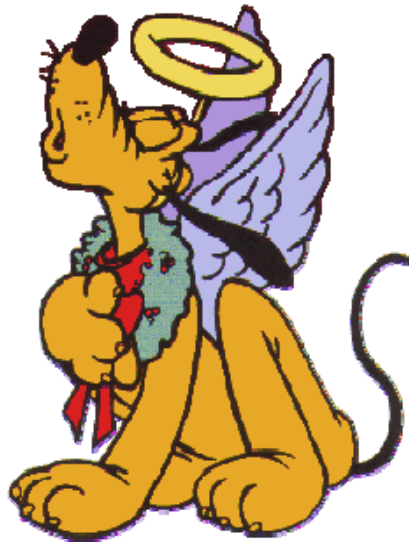


would not be possible at the North Pole, newspapers revealed that Santa Claus in fact lived in Finnish Lapland. "Uncle Markus", Markus Rautio, who compared the popular "Children's hour" on Finnish public radio, revealed the great secret for the first time in 1927: Santa Claus lives on Lapland's Korvatunturi - "Ear Fell" The fell, which is situated directly on Finland's eastern frontier, somewhat resembles a hare's ears - which are in fact Santa Claus's ears, with which he listens to hear if the world's children are being nice. Santa has the assistance of a busy group of elves, who have quite their own history in Scandinavian legend. Over the centuries, customs from different parts of the Northern Hemisphere thus came together and created the whole world's Santa Claus - the ageless, timeless, deathless white-bearded and red suited man who gives out gifts on Christmas and always returns to Korvatunturi in Finnish Lapland. Since the 1950s, Santa has happily sojourned at Napapiiri, near Rovaniemi, at times other than Christmas, to meet children and the young at heart. By 1985 his visits to Napapiiri had become so regular that he established his own Santa Claus Office

# December Bizarre , Wacky and Unique Holidays

1 Eat a Red Apple Day  
1 World Aids Awareness Day  
2 National Fritters Day  
3 National Roof over Your Head Day  
4 Santas' List Day  
4 Wear Brown Shoes Day  
5 Bathtub Party Day  
5 Repeal Day  
6 St. Nicholas Day  
6 Mitten Tree Day  
6 Put on your own Shoes Day  
7 International Civil Aviation Day  
7 Letter Writing Day  
7 National Cotton Candy Day  
7 Pearl Harbor Day  
8 National Brownie Day  
8 Take it in the Ear Day  
9 Christmas Card Day  
9 National Pastry Day  
10 Human Rights Day  
11 International Children's Day  
11 National Noodle Ring Day  
12 National Ding-a-Ling Day  
12 Poinsettia Day  
13 Ice Cream Day  
13 Violin Day  
14 National Bouillabaisse Day  
15 Bill of Rights Day  
15 National Lemon Cupcake Day  
16 National Chocolate Covered Anything Day  
17 National Maple Syrup Day  
18 Bake Cookies Day  
18 National Roast Suckling Pig Day  
19 Look for an Evergreen Day  
19 Oatmeal Muffin Day  
20 Go Caroling Day  
21 Forefather's Day  
21 Humbug Day  
21 National Flashlight Day  
21 Look on the Bright Side Day  
22 National Date Nut Bread Day  
23 Festivus - for the rest of us  
23 Roots Day  
24 National Chocolate Day  
24 National Egg Nog Day

25 Christmas Day  
25 National Pumpkin Pie Day  
26 Boxing Day  
27 Make Cut Out Snowflakes Day  
27 National Fruitcake Day  
28 Card Playing Day  
29 Pepper Pot Day  
30 National Bicarbonate of Soda Day  
31 Make Up Your Mind Day  
31 New Year's Eve  
31 Unlucky Day



# History of Hanukkah

The events that inspired the Hanukkah holiday took place during a particularly turbulent phase of Jewish history. Around 200 B.C., Judea—also known as the Land of Israel—came under the control of Antiochus III, the Seleucid king of Syria, who allowed the Jews who lived there to continue practicing their religion. His son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, proved less benevolent: Ancient sources recount that he outlawed the Jewish religion and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods. In 168 B.C., his soldiers descended upon Jerusalem, massacring thousands of people and desecrating the city's holy Second Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and sacrificing pigs within its sacred walls.

Led by the Jewish priest Mattathias and his five sons, a large-scale rebellion broke out against Antiochus and the Seleucid monarchy. When Mattathias died in 166 B.C., his son Judah, known as Judah Maccabee ("the Hammer"), took the helm; within two years the Jews had successfully driven the Syrians out of Jerusalem, relying largely on guerilla warfare tactics. Judah called on his followers to cleanse the Second Temple, rebuild its altar and light its menorah—the gold candelabrum whose seven branches represented knowledge and creation and were meant to be kept burning every night.

# Hanukkah Traditions

The Hanukkah celebration revolves around the kindling of a nine-branched menorah, known in Hebrew as the hanukiah. On each of the holiday's eight nights, another candle is added to the menorah after sundown; the ninth candle, called the shamash ("helper"), is used to light the others. Jews typically recite blessings during this ritual and display the menorah prominently in a window as a reminder to others of the miracle that inspired the holiday. In another allusion to the Hanukkah miracle, traditional Hanukkah foods are fried in oil. Potato pancakes (known as latkes) and jam-filled donuts (sufganiyot) are particularly popular in many Jewish households. Other Hanukkah customs include playing with four-sided spinning tops called dreidels and exchanging gifts. In recent decades, particularly in North America, Hanukkah has exploded into a major commercial phenomenon.

