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# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

2022  
SEASON

SPECIAL EVENT

PRODUCTION NUMBER 243

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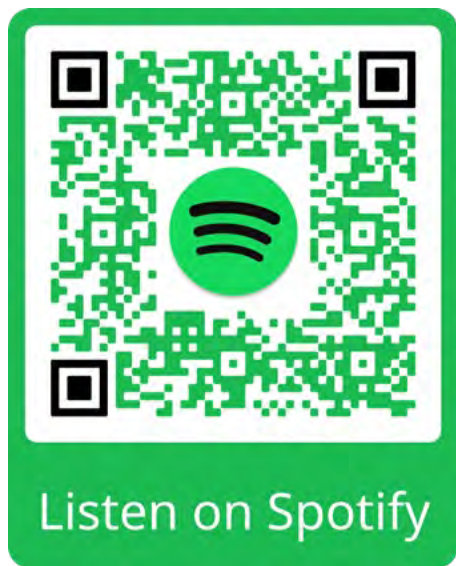
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# ◇ INTERESTING FACTS ◇

This telling of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is as full of carols as it is of Dickens' classic tale of Christmas redemption. While you may know the origin of modern Christmas music like "White Christmas" or "All I Want for Christmas", do you know the stories behind the classic carols you'll hear tonight?



*Listen to recordings of these carols and hymns on Spotify!*

## **GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN**

Did you know that in this well-known carol, not only are the gentlemen not merry, but they aren't even resting? The phrase "God rest you merry" dates to 1534 and means something like "God grant you peace and happiness" with "rest" meaning "to keep, to continue, to remain". The earliest version of this carol we can find is a manuscript dating to around 1650 and currently held in the

Bodleian Libraries at Oxford University with a different first line: "Sit you merry gentlemen". In Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, he also records a different first line: "God bless you merry gentlemen"

## **THE WEXFORD CAROL**

This carol takes its name from County Wexford on the eastern coast of Ireland, and while legend says it originated from the Middle Ages it more likely dates to the 15th or 16th Century due to the rhyme schemes involved. We know the song from Dr. William Grattan Flood, the musical director at St. Aidan's Cathedral in Enniscorthy in the early 20th Century who transcribed the music and lyrics from a local singer.

## **DING DONG MERRILY ON HIGH**

The tune to this carol first appeared in a 1589 collection of dance tunes called *Orchésographie*, by the French composer Jehan Tabourot. There was no connection to Christmas until an English composer named George Ratcliffe Woodward wrote the lyrics we know and published them in his 1924 *The Cambridge Carol-Book: Being Fifty-two Songs for Christmas, Easter, And Other Seasons*. Its Latin chorus of "Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!" translates roughly to "Glory! Praise God in the highest!"

## **GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN REJOICE**

While the English translation of this beloved carol dates to 1853, the carol itself is far older, originating in the 4th Century. It was originally written in both Latin and German, which indicates it was a folk carol for the people as only Latin would have been sung in Mass itself. In addition, the rhythms were not

what one would hear in Mass, coming from a folk-dance tradition instead of traditional plainsong.

## HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING

When Charles Wesley wrote “Hark! how all the welkin rings, Glory to the King of Kings” in his 1739 “Hymn for Christmas-Day” his words unwittingly began a journey of over 100 years that would bring us the carol we

know now. Fourteen years later, his student George Whitefield would alter the first line to the now-familiar “Hark! the herald angels sing—Glory to the newborn King!” but the slow and somber tune Wesley had requested was nowhere near the carol we know today. One hundred years after Whitfield’s change, it was British composer William Hayman Cummings who made some

### THREE NEW CHRISTMAS CAROLS.



St. MATTHEW.

**G**OD rest ye merry, Gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
Remember Christ our Saviour,  
Was born upon this Day,  
To save poor souls from Satan's power,  
Which long time had gone astray,  
Which brings tidings of comfort and joy.

From God, who is our Saviour,  
The holy angels came,  
Unto some certain shepherds  
Brought tidings of the news,  
That there was born in Bethlehem  
The Son of God by name,  
Which brings, &c.

When the shepherds heard their tidings,  
They much rejoic'd in mind,  
And left their flocks a feeding  
In tempestuous flocks of wind,  
And frisk they run to Bethlehem  
The Son of God to find,  
Which brings, &c.

And when they came to Bethlehem,  
Where our sweet Saviour lay,  
They found him in a manger,  
Where oxen fed on hay,  
The Virgin Mary kneeling down,  
Unto the Lord did pray,  
Which brings, &c.

God bless the ruler of this house,  
And all that are within,  
God bless your loving children,  
And grant you heaven may win,  
God bless you and your children  
That live both far and near:  
God give you a merry Christmas,  
And send you a joyful New Year.

God rest ye merry, Gentlemen,  
Who are within this place,  
I wish you all good brethren  
That truth you may embrace,  
For the merry time of Christmas  
Is drawing on apace,  
Which brings, &c.

**T**HE Morn'g shines bright,  
And the stars give a light;  
And a little before it was day,  
Our Lord God he called on us,  
And bid us awake and pray.  
Awake, awake, good people all,  
Awake and you shall hear:  
Our Lord our God died on the cross,  
For us whom he lov'd to death.

O fair, O fair Jerusalem,  
When first I came to thee?  
When all thy grief was at an end,  
Thy joy that we may see.  
The fields were green as green could be,  
When from his glorious seat,  
Our Lord our God he water'd us  
With his heavenly dew to sweet,  
And for the saving of our souls  
Christ died on the Cross:

We need shall do for Jesus Christ  
As he hath done for us.

The life of man is but a span,  
And cut down in his flower:  
We are here to-day, and gone to-morrow!  
We are all dead in an hour.

O teach you well, your children, men,  
The while that you are here:  
It will be better for your souls, dear men,  
When your corpse lies on the bier.

To-day you may be alive, dear man,  
With many a thousand pound;  
To-morrow you may be a dead man,  
And your corpse laid under ground.

With a turf at your head, dear man,  
And another at your feet.  
Your good deeds and your bad ones  
Then will together meet.

My feet is done, and I must be gone,  
I can stay no longer here:  
God bless you all, both great and small,  
And send you a joyful New Year.

**T**HE first good Joy our Mary had,  
It was the Joy of one;  
To see her own son Jesus  
To suck at her breast-bone,  
Good man, and blessed may he be  
Both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
And Christ to eternity.

The next good Joy our Mary had,  
It was the Joy of two;  
To see her own son Jesus  
To make the lame to go.

To make the lame, &c. Good Man, &c.  
The next good Joy our Mary had,  
It was the Joy of three;  
To see her own son Jesus  
To read the bible o'er.

The next good Joy our Mary had,  
It was the Joy of four;  
To see her own son Jesus  
To raise the dead to life.

The next good Joy our Mary had,  
It was the Joy of five;  
To see her own son Jesus  
To wear the crown of heavens.

The next good Joy our Mary had,  
It was the Joy of six;  
To see her own son Jesus  
To wear the crown of heavens.

The next good Joy our Mary had,  
It was the Joy of seven;  
To see her own son Jesus  
To wear the crown of heavens,  
Good man, and blessed may he be,  
Both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
And Christ to eternity.



St. MARK.



St. LUKE.



St. JOHN.



St. PETER.



St. PAUL.

Printed and Sold at the Printing-Office in Bow Church-Yard, London.



adjustments Felix Mendelssohn’s “Vaterland, in deinen Gauen” to bring us the melody we know today.

## TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

While the lyrics were first published in a 1780 children’s book, they appear to have their origins in an earlier children’s game. The children would need to recite all the previous lyrics and then add a new one — if you forgot you would lose and need to give your opponent a piece of candy or other small token. Both the game and printed poem did not have any music attached, and the tune we sing today was first performed by British singer and composer Frederic Austin in 1905. He based his performance on a tune that had been in his family long before that, with his only invention being the “five golden rings” section.

## BRING A TORCH, JEANETTE, ISABELLA

This carol originates in the Provence region of France, and dates to as early as the 15th Century. In legend, Jeanette and Isabella are two milkmaids who come to the stable to milk the cows, discover the baby Jesus, and rush back to their village carrying torches to announce the good news. To this day, many children in Provence will dress up as milkmaids and carry torches while singing this carol on their way to Midnight Mass.

## WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

Sung to the tune of “Greensleeves”, which likely dates to the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and was first published in 1580, the lyrics to this carol were composed in 1865 by William Chatterton Dix. Dix had been stricken with a serious illness and spent several months confined to his bed, weakened and depressed. This led to his spiritual awakening which

THE  
TWELVE DAYS  
OF  
CHRISTMAS.  
Sung at King Pepin’s Ball.



THE first day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me  
A partridge in a pear-tree,

*The first printed version of “The Twelve Days of Christmas” Mirth without mischief. Containing [sic] The twelve days of Christmas; The play of the gaping-wide-mouthed-wadling-frog; Love and hatred; ... and Nimble Ned’s alphabet and figures, London, [1800?]. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale.*

produced a great number of hymns and poems, including this carol based on his poem “The Manger Throne”.

## SUSSEX CAROL

If the “Sussex Carol” is a Christmas favorite of yours, you can thank Harriet Verrall of Monk’s Gate, near Horsham, Sussex in England. Despairing that traditional folk songs from around England were disappearing, composer Ralph Vaughan Williams traveled the countryside to document them and transcribed this carol as it was sung in 1909 by Mrs. Verrall.

## JOY TO THE WORLD

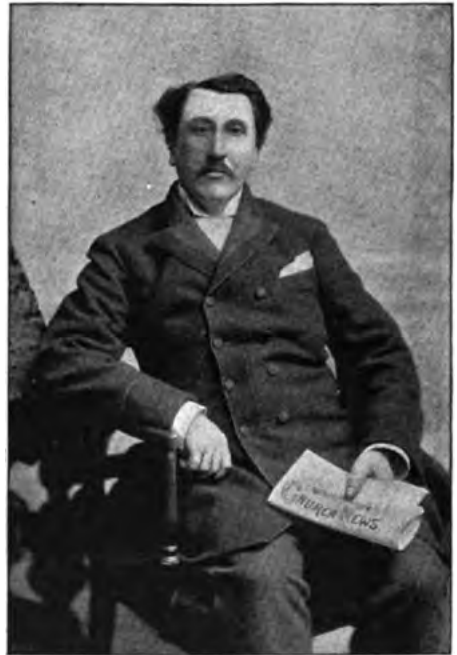
Inspired by Psalm 98, English minister Isaac Watts composed and published this hymn in 1719. The tune we sing with these lyrics has a much cloudier origin: it first appears in an 1848 composition by Lowell Mason and is often attributed to George Handel because Mason notes that the first chords of the song come from Handel's *Messiah*. However, it is actually a version of the tune "Antioch" of unknown origin but dating to the 1830s. Regardless of origin, it is the most-published Christmas hymn in North America, appearing in 1387 different hymnals through 1979 when the numbers were tabulated.

## CHRISTMAS IS COMING

While the origins of this traditional nursery rhyme and its accompanying tune are lost to history, we can track its modern popularity to 1960. It's in that year a field recording of the song sung by Jack Elliot of Birtley, Durham is entered in the British Library Sound Archive, and The Kingston Trio include it on their Christmas album *The Last Month of the Year* under the name "A Round About Christmas".

## O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

Musicologists and scholars debate the origins of this hymn and can only assert that it was written in Latin somewhere between the 13th and 18th centuries by any number of possible composers, including King John IV of Portugal. Because it was first introduced to English audiences in performance at the Portuguese Embassy in London in 1795 it was initially known as "The Portuguese Hymn". Its English translation first appears in print in 1852, combining translations by Frederick Oakeley and William Thomas Brooke.



MR. W. CHATTERTON DIX.  
(Author of "Come unto Me, ye weary.")  
From a Photo. by Lurdon Hall, Clifton.

*William Chatterton Dix, whose sickbed spiritual awakening brought us "What Child is This?"*