

In North America, children put stockings out at Christmas time. Their Dutch counterparts, however, use shoes. Dutch children set out shoes to receive gifts any time between mid-November and December 5, St. Nicholas' birthday.

When I Was a Boy

When I was a boy, Christmas was a time of great rejoicing and hilarity. It was kept up for twelve days, during which there was ball-playing, wrestling matches and games of various kinds. In every house was placed on the table a decanter of rum with a very large sweet cake, baked in a Dutch oven or a large iron bake-pot. Those who could afford it, in addition to rum, had also gin, brandy and wine placed on the table. All visitors were expected to help themselves.

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Then there were the mummers - those who went around by day and those who went around by night. The day mummers - the men had white shirts over their clothes, trimmed with ribbons, with fanciful hats. Each man had a partner - a man dressed in women's clothes. Into whatever house they entered they recited their lessons, ate and drank, had a dance, their own fiddler playing the tunes. The night mummers were dressed in the most grotesque manner: some with humpbacks, cow hides and horns projecting, with hobby-horses, small bags of flour, which they used to throw over their followers. Then there were the boy mummers, who went around day and night. On two Christmases I had John Bemister as a partner. He acted as the Duke of Wellington, and I personated Oliver Cromwell.



During the Christmas buying season, Visa cards alone are used an average of 5,340 times every minute in the United States.

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