



For over a hundred years Americans have exchanged holiday greetings with friends, family, neighbors, employers and co-workers coast-to-coast. Today's Christmas cards may be whimsical or religious, simple or elaborate...the variety is endless.

After the first Christmas cards were sold in England in 1843 and as postal service expanded, the Christmas card became tradition. Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol kindled such a romantic image of Christmas that it is credited with inventing the Victorian Christmas. Cards first looked like

valentines with lace and hearts only carrying holiday messages. Later village life and Christmas scenes were portrayed. The robin was a favorite Victorian symbol of fire and new life at a barren time of year.

Recently alternatives to traditional Christmas cards have sprung up. These newer forms of holiday greetings may be due partly to inflation or simply as a way of expressing individuality. One way to say "Merry Christmas" to neighbors is by baking cookies and candy and delivering them yourself. Rather than sending individual cards to co-workers, some people display a card or Christmas note on a company bulletin board extending happy holidays to all and noting a charitable contribution has been made. Some charities and organizations sell Christmas cards or notepaper featuring reproductions of original artwork or photographs. Art museum shops are a good source of high quality, individualized greeting cards. For the poet in you, Christmas notepaper or postcards allow you to express holiday sentiments personally. For creative people, with plenty of time,

there are "cards" to needlepoint or cross-stitch and photo cards to assemble. Put your children to work on your own or their own designs. Recycle last year's attractive Christmas cards as patchwork cards this year. The whole family can cut up the illustration portion of cards, then glue the pieces onto ledger bond paper and fold. Opened

up, the pieces form an old-fashioned patchwork design. The illustrated flap on old cards may be recycled as a postcard, too. It must be smooth—no embossed or flocked surfaces. Also, it must be as heavy as a regular post card. Check with the post office to be sure any "homemade" card will meet postal regulations.

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