

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



Baker Street *Elementary*

THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
113 - THE BIRTH OF VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CARDS - FEBRUARY, 2022



WELCOME TO TOPIC # 113... TODAY WE'LL BE
LOOKING AT VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CARDS...



THE ANNUAL TRADITION OF SENDING CHRISTMAS CARDS CAME ABOUT ALMOST BY ACCIDENT IN 1843.



DUE TO PROHIBITIVE COSTS THE IDEA WAS SLOW TO CATCH ON AND IT WAS AT LEAST 20 MORE YEARS BEFORE VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CARDS WERE COMMERCIALY MASS PRODUCED.



THE FIRST VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CARDS WERE DESIGNED BY ARTIST JOHN CALLCOTT HORSLEY AT THE SUGGESTION OF HIS INFLUENTIAL FRIEND SIR HENRY COLE, WHO WAS THE FIRST DIRECTOR APPOINTED TO THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM.



THESE CHRISTMAS CARDS WERE A LIMITED EDITION, PRODUCED BY JOBBINS OF WARWICK COURT IN LONDON AND PRINTED USING A PROCESS CALLED LITHOGRAPHY.



THE OUTLINES THEN HAD TO BE HAND-COLORED
BY A PROFESSIONAL COLOURER.



THEY WERE SOLD FOR A SHILLING EACH,
WHICH INCIDENTALLY WAS FAR MORE THAN
THE DAILY WAGE FOR MANY VICTORIAN
WORKERS AT THAT TIME.



THE FIRST VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CARD
MEASURED JUST OVER 5X3 INCHES AND IN THE
CENTRE WAS THE SKETCH OF A MERRY FAMILY
FEASTING, WITH TWO SCENES OF CHARITY ON
EITHER SIDE...



...FEEDING THE HUNGRY AND CLOTHING THE NAKED... THE SINGLE SIDED CARD WAS FINISHED WITH A PRINTED GREETING, 'A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU'.





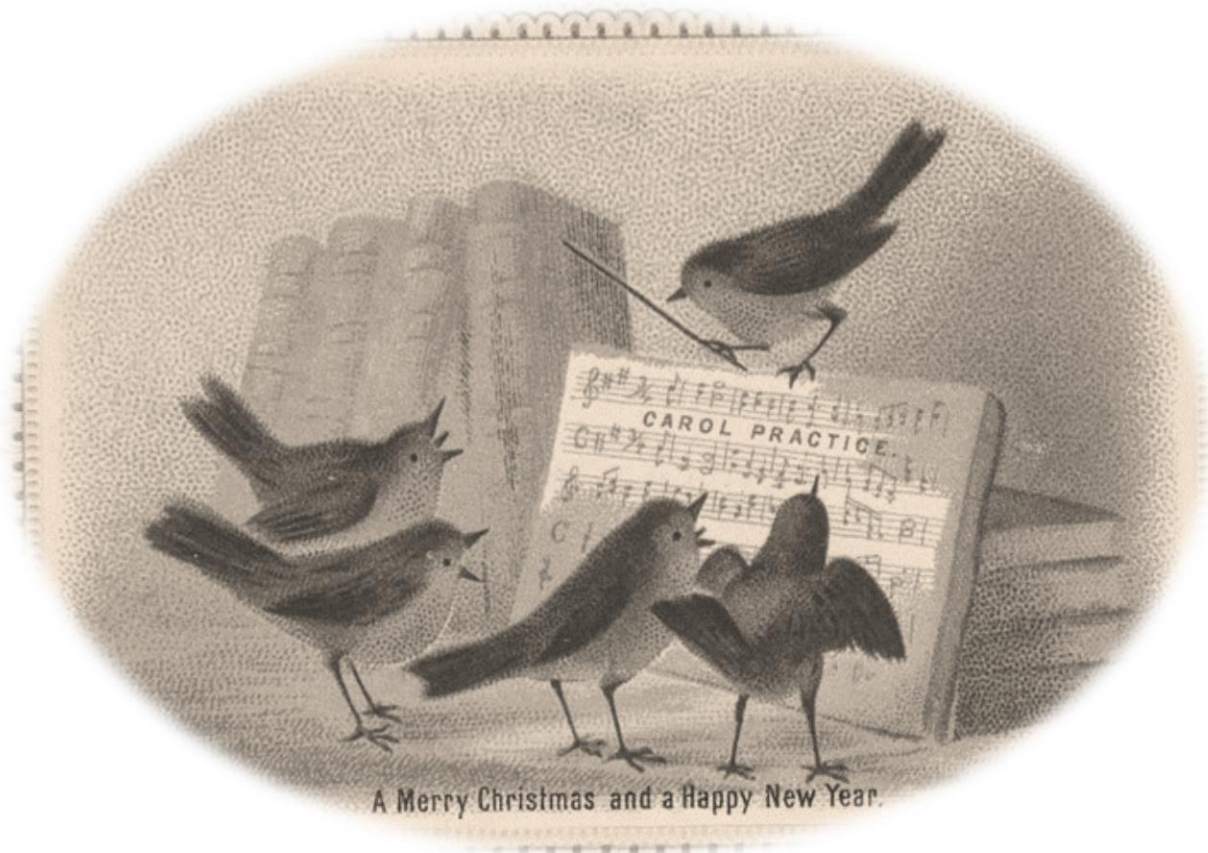
*OTHER PICTURE MAKERS FOLLOWED SUIT BUT THE
IDEA OF CHRISTMAS CARDS ONLY REALLY
BLOSSOMED WHEN CHARLES GOODALL & SON
BEGAN TO MASS PRODUCE THEM IN 1866.*



HE WAS A PUBLISHER OF VISITING CARDS,
WHICH WERE COMMONLY USED WHEN A PERSON
PAID A FORMAL CALL AND LEFT THEIR CARD AS A
REMINDER OF THEIR VISIT.



GOODALL EXPANDED THIS IDEA TO FOUR DESIGNS OF CHRISTMAS CARDS DESIGNED BY C.H. BENNETT WHICH FEATURED HOLLY, MISTLETOE AND ROBINS WITH A CHEERY CHRISTMAS GREETING.





SURPRISINGLY FOR A CHRISTIAN EVENT, EARLY VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CARDS DID NOT FEATURE ANY RELIGIOUS REFERENCE AT ALL.



IN 1870, THE ROYAL MAIL REDUCED THE COST OF POSTAGE TO A HALF PENNY PER OUNCE AND CHEAPER COLOR LITHOGRAPHY WAS DEVELOPED TO LOWER PRINTING COSTS.



THIS HERALDED THE SPREAD OF THE VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS CARD AND BY THE EARLY 1870S THE CUSTOM HAD ALSO BECOME POPULAR IN AMERICA.



SOON ARTISTS, PRINTERS, ENGRAVERS AND WRITERS SAW THE POTENTIAL AND BY 1880 THEY BEGAN TO BE COMMERCIALY MASS PRODUCED.



ONE LONDON PRINT FIRM, S HILDESHEIMER & CO,
RAN A COMPETITION IN 1881 FOR THE MOST
ARTISTIC DESIGNS.



**MANY GREAT ARTISTS SUBMITTED THEIR DESIGNS
HOPING TO WIN A SHARE OF THE GENEROUS PRIZE
OF FIVE HUNDRED GUINEAS.**



POEMS AND FLOWERY GREETINGS WERE WRITTEN AND THE ERA OF THE CHRISTMAS CARD FINALLY DAWNED.



**FROM 1866 TO 1895 MARCUS WARD & CO
MONOPOLIZED THE CHRISTMAS CARD MARKET
WITH THEIR LITHOGRAPHED CARDS...**



*...DESIGNED BY NOTEWORTHY ARTISTS SUCH AS
KATE GREENAWAY, THOMAS CRANE AND HIS
SON WALTER.*



THEY FEATURED CUTE VICTORIAN FIGURES, SNOW SCENES, CHERUBS AND NAKED ANGELS IN TYPICAL VICTORIAN STYLE.



**MANY OF THESE DESIGNS HAVE BEEN REPRODUCED
IN LATER YEARS AND VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS
CARDS REMAIN VERY COLLECTIBLE.**



THEY BEGAN TO BE SOLD BY BOOKSELLERS AND STATIONERY SHOPS IN THE 1880s AND THEN EXPANDED TO TOBACCONISTS, TOY SHOPS AND EVEN DRAPERY SHOPS.



HOWEVER, BY 1895 MANY PUBLISHING FIRMS OF
EARLY VICTORIAN GREETING CARDS WERE FORCED
OUT OF BUSINESS IN LONDON...



*...AS MORE AFFORDABLE GERMAN-PRODUCED
CHRISTMAS CARDS FLOODED THE MARKET.*



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 113 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 114, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT RESTROOMS, BATHROOMS OR PRIVIES IN THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.



AboutBritain.com

ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THIS TOPIC:

- [HTTP://WWW.ABOUTBRITAIN.COM/ARTICLES/VICTORIAN-CHRISTMAS-CARDS.ASP](http://www.aboutbritain.com/articles/victorian-christmas-cards.asp)



Baker Street Elementary

"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

JOE FAY
LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE
RUSTY MASON
&
STEVE MASON

