The History and Origin of Christmas Music
(Carol: French = dancing around in a circle.)

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In their earliest beginning the early carols had nothing to do with Christmas or the Holiday season. They were originally written to furnish music for the ‘calle,’ an ancient dance which was related to fertility rites that pagans celebrated. These carols gradually found their way into Christian rituals although the church was uneasy about including them. Historians say that Bishop Telesphorus of Rome introduced Christmas songs about 129 A.D. According to the writings of St. Jerome we find carols used in the 5th century. In the mid 7th century they were forbidden. This attitude continued well into the 12th century.

The church’s criticism eased during medieval times and there was a merger of them with the folk and popular songs of that era. St. Francis of Assisi formally introduced Christmas Carols to church service during the 12th century. There developed a style of religious music called a ‘lauda.’ It then merged with the custom called ‘wassailing.’ The activity of singing these lauda by a group that went to each house in a row was meant to drive away evil spirits and secure their good health. We now know this activity as ‘caroling.’

We still have caroling going on today although it is not as popular as it was seven centuries ago. But the carol still had one obstacle to overcome when the Puritan English
Parliament abolished Christmas altogether and anyone who continued to celebrate the Christian holiday with singing might be accused of witchcraft and death. After some decades of difficulty the carols again gained popularity and this continued during the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of our carols we have today were written and sung during this time.

Martin Luther spoke of going caroling with his children in Germany and wrote “The Cradle Hymn.” One of the oldest carols “Good King Wenceslas” was first published in one of Luther’s collections in 1582. Charles Dickens helped restore Christian carols when many thought they would become extinct by using “Wenceslas” in his well-known “A Christmas Carol.”

Most Performed Secular Christmas Songs

1 – The Christmas Song
2 - White Christmas
3 - Santa Claus is Coming to Town
4 - Winter Wonderland
5 - Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas
6 - Sleigh Ride
7 - Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer
8 - Little Drummer Boy
9 - I’ll Be Home For Christmas
10- Silver Bells
11- Jingle Bell Rock
12- Blue Christmas
13- Let it Snow
14- Feliz Navidad
15- Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree
16- Frosty the Snowman
17- I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus
18- It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year
19- Have a Holly Jolly Christmas
20- Here Comes Santa Claus
21- The Carol of the Bells
22- It’s Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas
23- The Chipmunk Song
24- Santa Baby
25- We Need A Little Christmas

This list is from ASCAP and all the songs are in copyright. Although the religious carols are in public domain, these secular songs regulated by ASCAP are kept track of for royalty payments. There is no way to check on the performance of carols. If there were they would be on the list. During Christmas they are heard in church services, on the radio and TV and from private record and CD players.
**The Christmas Song** - Mel Torme – 1944

Written during a summer heat wave in Los Angeles. Bob Wells, co-writer, had jotted down some phrases to help him keep cool: “Chestnuts roasting”, “Jack Frost nipping”, “Yuletide carols”, “Folks dressed up like Eskimos”. Mel Torme, a young jazz singer, known as the ‘Velvet Fog’ for his sultry singing voice, took forty minutes to come up with a melody and some of the words for the most performed Christmas song of our time. Wells had remember seeing his mother bring home a bag of chestnuts to use to stuff a turkey. He then thought of the vendors he used to see selling chestnuts on the streets of New York, thus the phrase “Chestnuts roasting on an open fire.”

Torme in 1944 had formed a vocal group that included Les Baxter and Henry Mancini. Torme went on to establish a highly acclaimed career as a singer, arranger and composer. He died in the summer of 1999 on June 9th - 3 weeks from the 55th anniversary of the song. He was 73, well between the ages of one and 92 that the song mentions. The hit recording was made by Nat ‘King’ Cole in 1946 after Torme and Wells took the newly written song to Cole’s house. In the middle of a 90+ degree temperature Torme sat down at Nat’s piano and sang the song to Cole. Soon after Cole recorded the song and the rest is history. Cole had loved the song and thought it a classic. Within days Cole had worked out all the details like fitting the song to his voice, and then cut the song for Capitol Records. It was released in October of 1946 and reached the top of the hit parade staying there for almost two months. The song has been popular since then and has been recorded by over a 100 artists. Nat Cole was the first African American to introduce an American Christmas standard to the world.

**White Christmas** – 1942 – Irving Berlin

Written for the movie “Holiday Inn.” Mostly written in Palm Springs, CA, the verse Berlin wrote was satirizing Hollywood. Berlin decided not to use the verse in the movie.

Verse:

“The sun is shining, the grass is green,
The orange and palm trees sway.
I’ve never seen such a day in Beverly Hills, LA
But it’s December the 24th and I am longing to be up north.”
Berlin had been mulling over a Christmas song for several years, doodling with a satire on American seasonal sentimentality. Berlin and his wife did not like Christmas probably due to the death of their young son just before Christmas. He envisioned the song as a satirical novelty number for a vaudeville-style stage revue.

In the verse we see the feelings of Berlin come to life realizing that he missed his New York during the Christmas season. It was also written during the war and the song showed the feeling of separation from friends and family during the season. Berlin had doubts about the song but Crosby assured him it was a winner and he was right as the song won the Oscar for best song for the year 1942.

*Santa Claus is Coming to Town – (1934)*

Fred Coots

Fred Coots and his lyric writer, Haven Gillespie, met one day on a subway in Brooklyn. Both were already well-established in the songwriting business. Haven had lyrics for a kid’s Christmas song and Coots set them to music. Publishers didn’t want to put it out but finally they did. It became a big hit (1934) on Eddie Cantor’s radio program. Cantor also performed the song when Santa Claus entered Macy’s Department Store during that year’s Christmas parade. Cantor recorded it and it became a smash hit. Other hits among many by Coots include: “Love Letters in the Sand,” and “You Go To My Head.”

Gillespie was never excited about it. He had met with his publishers in Manhattan after attending his brother Irwin’s funeral. They approached him about writing a children’s Christmas song but he was not in the mood for it and lacked enthusiastic energy about composing any songs for kids. The publisher thought that Gillespie was talented and had a good vocabulary for writing simple children’s lyrics.

After leaving the publisher’s office he boarded the subway and fifteen minutes later he had the lyrics to “Santa.” While it was a huge hit, Gillespie was never thrilled about the song’s success because it always reminded him of his brother’s death.
**Winter Wonderland** – (1934)

By Felix Bernard and Richard Smith. Richard died the year after publication, 1935; Felix died 10 years later. Felix also wrote the popular song “Dardanella”.

Use of the name Parson Brown: While other explanations are given, my opinion is that it refers to an old composition by L.E. Zoeller “Parson Brown, Preaching to the People”, published in 1919 and played by J. J. Shilling’s Orchestra.
**Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas** – Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane - 1944

Written in 1944 for the movie “Meet Me in St. Louis.” The original was a much darker song, written about hopes for a better Christmas in the future. Lyrics were changed for Judy Garland who did not like the message of the lyrics. The lyrics were changed for her benefit. The origin lyrics of the song were sinister and pessimistic. The two last sections show this change:

> “Through the years we all will be together
> If the fates allow,
> Hang a shining star upon the highest bough
> And have yourself a merry little Christmas now.”

The first lyric:

> “In a year we all will be together
> If the fates allow.
> Until then, we’ll just have to muddle through somehow
> And have ourselves a merry little Christmas now.”

Judy Garland sang this song in the movie to her younger sister Tootie. Tootie was concerned about the upcoming move to New York and that Santa wouldn’t be able to know where she was. Esther (Garland’s character) was also concerned as she was attracted to the boy next store. Judy sang this song which was filled with pain and irony with the thought that ‘have yourself a merry little Christmas as it may be your last; next year you’ll be living in the past.” Garland didn’t like the pessimism in the lyrics and with her star power sent it back to Blane and Martin and asked them to put a more positive spin on the lyrics. We must remember that this time were the war years and Garland felt they needed to give the troops something to come home to and that they had a lot to live for. Judy was right and when she sang the song for the armed forces at the Hollywood Canteen there was not a dry eye in the audience. The song remains to this day a timeless, profound statement about the feeling we all have during the Christmas season.
The chord changes are very similar to the tune “Blue Moon.” Martin also wrote: “Buckle Down Winsocki,” “The Boy Next Store,” and “The Trolley Song.”

**Sleigh Ride – 1948**

Leroy Anderson wrote “Sleigh Ride” for orchestra while vacationing in Woodbury CT during a heat wave in July. Words were added by Mitchell Parish (lyricist of “Stardust”) in 1950. Anderson is quoted as saying: “Sleigh Ride was one of the first things I wrote when I got out of the Army and moved to Woodbury, Connecticut. Actually, I first came here in 1946, you may remember there was a housing shortage then, and my mother-in-law was living up here and had a cottage that was vacant. Since we had no other place to go, we packed our fourteen-month-old daughter, plus the upright piano, and came on up here to Woodbury. During that first summer that we were here I wrote “Sleigh Ride”. I remember it was just an idea because, it was just a pictorial thing, it wasn’t necessarily Christmas music, and it was written during the heat wave.” Anderson wrote this as a musical description of a sleigh ride.

In a quote from Anderson about the beginning of writing this song he said, “I started with the sounds and rhythms of sleigh bells and then wrote it from there.” It was first recorded by the Boston Pops in 1949.

**Words:**

“Just hear those sleigh bells jingling
Ring ting tingling too
Come on, it’s lovely weather
For a sleigh ride together with you,
Outside the snow is falling
And friends are calling “Yoo hoo,”
Come on, it’s lovely weather
For a sleigh ride together with you.”

In a letter to a Mr. Hasen dated August 21, 1972, Mr. Anderson wrote:

“I am replying to your letter of June 28, 1972 concerning “Sleigh Ride” and also enclosing some biographical material which may be of interest to you.
“I began “Sleigh Ride” in the summer of 1946 in a cottage in Woodbury CT where my wife and I were spending the summer with our eighteen-month-old daughter. (See Military Service in the curriculum vitae) The original version began with what later became the middle section. I recall working on it in the middle of a heat wave, so there is no basis for the music except the title itself.

“That same summer I also worked on “Fiddle Faddle” and “Serenata.” After moving to Brooklyn NY in the fall I finished “Fiddle Faddle” on Jan 1, 1947, and “Serenata” on Feb. 12, 1947 in addition to making arrangements for the Boston Pops concerts in the spring.

“I had felt that the original theme of “Sleigh Ride” was not strong enough to start the number but would make a good middle section. I finally worked out a satisfactory main theme, introduction and coda and finished the orchestra score on Feb. 10, 1948. “Sleigh Ride” was first performed on May 4, 1948 in Symphony Hall, Boston, as an extra at a Pops concert conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Lyrics by Mitchell Parish were added in 1950”.

Other sleigh-ride songs include: “Troika” from Prokofiev’s “Lieutenant Kije”, 1934, a piece written by Mozart in 1791, and of course “Jingle Bells.”

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**Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer – 1949 by Johnny Marks**

In 1939 Montgomery Ward asked Robert May to come up with a Christmas story coloring book to give away to shoppers. He rejected the names Rollo (too cheerful) and Reginald (too British) and decided on Rudolph. Ward worried about red noses associated with drinking and drunkards not suitable for Christmas. Gillen’s illustrations overcome this. Six million copies were sold by the end of 1946. Johnny Marks put words and music to “Rudolph” and Gene Autry recorded it in 1949.

May’s wife was dying with cancer and their young daughter wondered why her mom wasn’t like the other moms. May was writing this story based partly on “The Ugly Duckling” and about a reindeer with a red nose. His wife died before he finished the story and binded it as a book for his wife’s final gift on Christmas morning. Montgomery Ward issued some 2.6 million “Rudolph” coloring books at Christmas of 1939. His brother-in-law, the composer Johnny Marks, adapted the story into a children’s song. It was recorded by Gene Autry. His wife Ina insisted that Gene record it and it was an instant hit. Johnny Marks also wrote “Holly Jolly Christmas,” “Rock Around the Christmas Tree,” and “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year.”
**All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth**

Donald Y. Gardner wrote this in 1944 for his class in public school in Smithtown, New York. He asked the class what they wanted for Christmas and noticed that most of them had at least one tooth missing at their age. He wrote the song in thirty minutes.

**Blue Christmas - 1945**

The printed music of “Blue Christmas” lists Billy Hayes and Jay Johnson as the composers of the tune. The original composers were Billy Hayes and Zeb Carver. To get the song published Carver was asked to remove his name as the publisher didn’t think three names would look good so Carver’s was taken off and Jay Johnston’s name was added. He was the one that had the connections to helping the song.

The first time it was heard was in New York at the Village Barn in 1948. This information is given by Zeb’s granddaughter Lorrie Carver.

**The Little Drummer Boy - 1941**

Katherine Davis discovered an old Czech/Spanish melody (Tabolilleros) and added English words to it. It was first named “The Carol of the Drum” but became “The Little Drummer Boy” - this was in 1941. She also said that the song came to her while trying to take a nap. It was first recorded by the Trapp Family Singers. The most popular recording was by the Harry Simeone Chorale.

In 1977 Crosby had David Bowie on his TV show. Bing wanted to have one of the young entertainers on ‘to give them a break.’ Someone suggested David Bowie. Crosby had no idea who Bowie was. When trying to come up with the music Bowie remarked that the ‘Parumpatum-bum’ didn’t adapt to his voice so a countermelody (Peace on Earth) was suggested by the composers to the program personnel. The dialogue on the show was interesting. The patter that was written for the two was very funny and typical Crosby/Bowie exchange. Bing died a month later. Bing never knew the ‘real’ Bowie but as a ‘clean-cut kid and a real fine asset to the show.’
David Bowie & Bing Crosby dialog on TV program:

DB: I’m pleased to meet you. You’re the one that sings, right?
BC: Well, right or wrong, I sing either way.
BC: Have you ever listened to any of the older fellows?
DB: Oh yeah, sure. I like John Lennon and others.
BC: You go back that far, uh?
DB: Yeah, I’m not as young as I look!
BC: None of us is these days!

**Here Comes Santa Claus – 1947 – Gene Autry and Oakley Haldeman**

Autry was inspired to write the lyrics while riding ahead of the Santa float on his horse in the 1946 annual Hollywood Christmas parade. Gene heard the crowds of children shouting “Here Comes Santa Claus!” The kids screamed for Santa Claus, not Autry. The original title: “The Santa Claus Parade”. Thus it became the first of several Christmas songs made popular by the singing cowboy, Gene Autry.
**Frosty the Snowman – 1950 – Nelson/Rollins**

After “Rudolph” was published and made money, composers Nelson and Rollins said, “We could write something that stupid; those guys are making a fortune and we want money too.” They approached Gene Autry and he agreed to record it. The two composers also wrote “Here Comes Peter Cottontail.”

**Jingle Bells - 1857**

Written by James Pierpont in 1857, this song memorializes the sled races (called ‘cutter’ drag races) in Boston. Sleighs would race between Medford and Malden Square, a distance of about a mile, with the young drivers trying to pick up local girls along the way. Written as part of a Thanksgiving program in 1857 for his father’s Sunday school class, it doesn’t contain any references to Christmas or things related to the icons associated with the holiday. The song was originally called ‘One Horse Open Sleigh.” When performed on Thanksgiving Day it was very warmly received and it was requested that the song be sung again at the Christmas service. It was so well received that many took the song back home, presenting it as a Christmas song since they had heard it on Christmas day.
There are differing claims as to the song being either written in Bedford or Savannah GA. There are also differing stories about how it was written. The story most accepted is that Pierpont went to the house of Mrs. Waterman and played it on the piano there. She remarked “That’s a merry little jingle.” The song was copyrighted and published in 1857.

Pierpont was born in Bedford MA in 1822. He went to sea in a ship called “The Shark” at age 14. Returning in 1845, he left his wife and children with his father and went to San Francisco to find his fortune. His wife, Millicent Cowee, died of TB two years after he left in 1846. Upon finally returning, he abandoned his children and left with his brother for Savannah, GA, playing organ in his brother’s new church. He fought for the South during the Civil War. He married Eliza James Purse, the daughter of the mayor of Savannah. Pierpont was the uncle of financier/banker J.P. Morgan.

It is a good song to sing or hear prior to Christmas to get us in the holiday mood but probably isn’t heard much on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, especially in church services. It seems to be a predecessor to the theme of “White Christmas” as both songs had snow in its lyrics. The song has been recorded by many recording artist but the one record that seemed to be liked the best is the Bing Crosby, Andrews Sisters singing a swinging jazz style version on the song.
Let it Snow – Jule Styne & Sammy Kahn

Jule Styne gave the following brief on the writing of “Let it Snow”:

On a very, very hot day in the late summer of 1945, Jule and Sammy were at the corner of Hollywood and Vine, waiting for a red light. Sammy said to Jule, “Why don’t we go to the beach?”

Jule replied, “Why don’t we write a winter song?”

So they went to the Morris Music Company on Vine Street where Sammy used a spare typewriter to dummy-up lyrics for “Let It Snow.” Jules sat down at a nearby desk to scrawl the notes. They polished the tune on Elm Drive later that day. The song was another winner.

I’ll Be Home For Christmas - 1942 - Kim Gannon and Walter Kent

The song was a huge success in America. Our soldiers had gone to war and their families faced the holidays separated. The song was the right song at the right time. It was
wartime and the sentiments of the lyrics are almost a prayer that would be spoken by our troops so far away. It represented their dreams, hopes and wishes to be once again home with their families.

Gannon wrote the lyrics for three Academy Award-winning songs, with none of the nominations gaining standard status. Walter Kent wrote “White Cliffs of Dover”, also in 1942. Writing the lyrics was a very emotional thing for Gannon. The war was being felt on two fronts – the battlefield and the home town. In this case, Gannon’s home town was Brooklyn, New York. He saw the strong emotional feelings of those who remained on the home front, with the uncertainty of their love ones fighting so far away. Gannon, in the background of a hellish nightmare of war, wrote a lyric that was direct to the point with a feeling of hope and optimism. He gave his lyrics to Walter Kent, a great choice since Kent had just written the sentimental song, “The White Cliffs of Dover.” The melody proved perfect for the words and gave the song a longing, dreamy and hopeful feeling that made the listener a part of the song and that it was written just for that person. This song will always have a place with all Americans during a time of war— in our hearts, souls, memories and dreams.

Gannon was a graduate of St. Lawrence University (1925) and through his estate, (he died in 1974), St. Lawrence receives royalties from Gannon’s many compositions. In the years 2002-2003 the university received $18,000. As many composers did, Gannon and Walter Kent wanted to write both a Christmas song and a patriotic one. In this song they accomplished both. It was recorded by Bing Crosby in 1943 and became very popular making the hit parade for eleven weeks. For countless service men and women this song brought them closer to home while thousands of miles away.

There is some controversy as to the lyrics. Buck Ram wrote a poem by the same name as a 16-year-old as a gift for his mother. In 1942, Ram’s publisher chose to hold the song for release because they wanted to release Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas” first. Ram later earlier had discussed his concerns about the action with two acquaintances in a bar. He left a copy of the poem with them but never discussed it with them again. He and his publisher were shocked when the song was released by another publisher, without Ram being credited. Ram’s publisher sued, won, and Ram’s name has been included with the other two ‘acquaintances’. It might be added that the tune was played on one of the trips to the moon.
Silver Bells – Ray Evans and Jay Livingston - 1950

Originally entitled “Twinkle Bells,” this song was about the Santa Clauses and the Salvation Army workers on New York street corners tinkling their bells. Verse and chorus can be sung at the same time. It was written for the movie The Lemon Drop Kid which takes place in N.Y. City at Christmas and was composed because the studio wanted a Christmas song.

There have been many Christmas songs written about the traditions of rural life but for the first time we have a Christmas song written about city life. The song reminds me of my personal remembrance of Christmas time in Washington, D.C. Besides seeing Santa Claus one of the highlights was just walking down in the heart of the commercial district in D.C. and looking at the department store Christmas windows decorated with festive materials, each having a different twist on the holiday theme. There were about four or five big department stores with shoppers walking past them, especially when it was snowing, hearing the Salvation Army people with their small bands and the ringing of small silver hand bells to attract attention in hopes of getting donations for their charity work. The playing of carols by other stores with outside speakers put everyone in the Christmas mood. It must have been in this same mood that Evans and Livingston felt as they began to write a song for Bob Hope to sing in The Lemon Drop Kid.

While they were working on ideas one of the members of their group had a little silver bell and was fooling around with its construction. It caused the group to think of Christmases past and the things they associated with Christmas in the city. They used these remembrances as subjects for the lyrics of a Christmas song. Once finished they took it home and played it for Mrs. Evans. She thought it great but suggested one change. The phrase ‘twinkle bells’ might make some people laugh and suggested that they change it to ‘Silver Bells.’ Thus the name and the song were complete. It became a hit and it is the song that the movie is remembered for.

Livingston also wrote: “Mona Lisa,” “To Each His Own,” “The Twelfth of Never;” and wrote songs that won Oscars: “Buttons and Bows,” and “Que Sera’”, both with Ray Evans’s lyrics. For TV he wrote the theme songs for: “Bonanza,” “Mr. Ed,” “Lawman,” “Colt 45,” “Sugarfoot,” “77 Sunset Strip”, “Surfside 6”, “Casper the Friendly Ghost,” and “Cheyenne.” The most famous of his compositions and the one that kids all know is “Mairzy Doats”. For his part, Evans’s hits included “Golden Earrings”, “Dear Heart”, “Tammy”, and “To Each His Own”.
It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas

Written by Meredith Willson in 1951, it was recorded by Perry Como and became a hit. The song was used in the Broadway musical written by Willson entitled “Here’s Love,” a 1963 musical version of “Miracle on 34th St.” that was not as successful as Willson’s other two musicals, The Music Man and The Unsinkable Molly Brown. This song was about the only song that is still used from the musical. It is Derek Jeter’s (Yankee baseball player) favorite Christmas song.

Willson also wrote the song “May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You” in 1950. He was trained in music at Julliard in New York and played flute and piccolo for John Philip Sousa’s Band from 1921-1923 and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under Toscanini from 1924 to 1929. He worked as music director for NBC in Hollywood; did musical scores for movies and acted in the radio show “Burns and Allen” as a shy character as well as conducting the orchestra for that radio show. The cast album of The Music Man won the first Grammy award ever given. He also wrote some classical music which included at least three symphonies. The Beatles did his “Till There Was You” from The Music Man.

Jingle Bell Rock – 1957 – Joe Beal and Jim Boothe

Another song possibly influenced by the song “Jingle Bells” is “Jingle Bell Rock,” popularized by Bobby Helms. Susan Cooper Eastman researched this story of tragedy, family drama, and a mystery of legendary proportions.

Hank Garland was a guitarist in Nashville who had played on records by Patsy Cline, Elvis Presley and other artists. He died in a tragic car accident. Hank had said that he wrote “Jingle Bell Rock” and it was his guitar heard on the recording. Hank said the song was stolen from him.

This story has been repeated a number of times and in some of our carols we see this scenario.
Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree
This song written in 1958 by Johnny Marks is one of a few Christmas songs written by Marks including “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” “A Holly Jolly Christmas,” and “The Most Wonderful Day of the Year.” There are few songs written about the Christmas Tree (O Tannenbaum) and one of only a few carols written in the rock idiom (another is “Jingle Bell Rock”). Many did not think that rock was the best medium in which to write a Christmas song. Irving Berlin objected to Elvis Presley recording his “White Christmas.” The lyrics picture a Christmas dance with the dancing done in a new ‘old-fashioned’ way.

Up On The Housetop
This song was written by Benjamin R. Hanby around 1860 and may be the first important song on the theme of Santa Claus. It was also one of the first secular Christmas songs. Many have speculated that Hanby also might have written “Jolly Old St. Nicholas”. Its lyrics do seem to have been influenced by the 1823 Clement Clarke Moore’s poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas.” These are the only two pieces of work that mention Santa landing on a housetop with his sleigh.

Hanby was the composer of some five dozen songs which include the well-known song “Darling Nelly Gray.” He was a teacher and minister and later worked for publisher John Church. His house has been restored and is at 160 West Main St. in Westerville, Ohio and is open for public viewing.
Religious Carols

**Silent Night**

Written on Dec. 24, 1816 by Joseph Mohr, a young priest. The story has been given that the church organ broke at St. Nicola in Oberndorf, Austria on Christmas Eve. The congregation at Midnight Mass at St. Nicholas church listened to the carol sung by the choir and Father Joseph Mohr and Franz Gruber to the accompaniment of Father Mohr’s guitar.

The true story is much like the following:

On December 24, 1818 Father Mohr journeyed to the town of Franz Gruber. He showed the poem to his friend and asked him to write a melody with guitar accompaniment to the verse so that it could be used at Midnight Mass.

Acquiring the song the traveling family, the Rainers, sang the song before royalty. In 1839 they performed “Stille Nacht” for the first time in America, at the Alexander Hamilton Monument outside Trinity church in New York City. Strange that the words came from a young priest, the music from a person who was not known outside his small village, and there was no famous group to introduce it – yet the inspirational and powerful message has crossed all borders and language barriers, introduced to all of mankind with hopes of its message and benefit.

One of its most inspiring performances was given by Austrian opera star Ernestine Schumann-Heinke. She had two sons - one of them on the German side of a battlefield during WWI, the other on the Allies side. On Christmas Eve fighting was suspended along several fronts on the battlefield while soldiers on both sides turned on their radios to hear a broadcast of Schumann-Heinke, who sang “Silent Night.” For a few tranquil moments, the powerful, hopeful message of peace was heard dramatically realized.
A view of St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf.

Calmly with reverence

FRANZ GRÜBER

1. Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright.
2. Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight!
3. Silent night! Holy night! Son of God, love's pure light!

Round yon Virgin Mother and Child! Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Glories stream from heav'n afar, Heav'nly hosts sing, "Alleluia!"
Radiant beams from Thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace,

Sleep in heav'ly peace! Sleep in heav'ly peace!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth! Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth!
O, Holy Night

The words to ‘O, Holy Night’ were written by Placide Clapéau in 1847. Clapéau was known as a poet and wine merchant and the mayor of Roquemaure, France. The poem was translated by Unitarian minister John Sullivan Dwight, more famous for his journal “Dwight’s Journal of Music” which chronicled the development of the music of New England before, during, and after the Civil War.

The music was written by Adolphe-Charles Adam and is best known for his ballet (Giselle-1841) and his operatic works. The text had its origin when the parish priest asked Placide to pen a poem for Christmas Mass. Clapéau used the gospel of Luke for his theme. On his way to Paris he completed the poem “Cantique de Noel.”

To give this poem a master’s touch he enlisted his friend Adolphe-Charles Adams who had studied at the Paris Conservatoire. Adams was inspired by the poem and, although he was Jewish, he went to work. Upon completion the composition was sung at midnight mass on Christmas Eve. When the church found out that Adams was Jewish, they denounced the song, saying that it “lacked musical taste and was totally absent of the spirit of religion.” (I wonder what they would have thought of “Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer”.) It would have died out except for John Sullivan Dwight, a graduate of Harvard College Divinity School. Dwight had difficulty addressing a large gathering of people such as his congregation and had to give up his ministry and concentrate on editing a musical journal that became an important research work in the study of the early music of New England. Dwight found the carol and immediately had a bond with the song’s message about Christ coming to free all men, slaves included. With its publication in his journal it soon found favor all through America and especially in the North during the Civil War.

There is a unique story about the song as it made its way back to France during the time of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. On Christmas Eve in 1870 while there was fierce fighting a French soldier came out of a trench and boldly stood with no weapon and, turning his head and eyes to heaven, he began singing “O Holy Night. After he finished three verses a German soldier jumped out of his trench and answered with a Christmas carol of his country – “Vom Himmel hoch du komm ich her.” The fighting stopped for the next 24 hours and there was a temporary truce in honor of Christmas Day.

Another story tells of Reginald Fessenden, a former chief chemist for Thomas Edison. Fessenden, using a new type of generator, spoke into a microphone on Christmas Eve, 1906 and broadcast the verse from Luke, “And it came to pass in those days….” After reciting this passage he picked up his violin and began playing “O Holy Night”. Fessenden was probably unaware of the sensation his actions caused: it was the first piece of music ever sent through the air via radio waves.
O Come, All Ye Faithful – (Adeste Fidelis)

At first known as an anonymous Latin hymn, later research has revealed that it was written in 1744 by an Englishman named John Francis Wade. He was living in Douay, France when he wrote the hymn. It first appeared in the collection, “Cantus Diversi”, in 1751. One hundred years later it was translated from the Latin text to English by an Anglican minister, Frederick Oakeley. The first words of the hymn “Adeste Fideles,” mean “Be present or near, faithful.”

In 1786 it was heard at the Portuguese Embassy in London and by the Duke of Leeds and was introduced to major concerts as being Portuguese which it wasn’t.

John Wade was a Catholic priest in England in the middle of a war between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics were forced to worship underground. To avoid persecution Wade fled to Douay, France, where he was assigned the job to research and preserve historical church music. Wade was a calligrapher by trade and was a skilled musician. He saved and introduced many of the old church repertoires that might have been lost except for Wade’s diligent work. Around 1750 Wade wrote (in Latin) a work that would became one of the most endearing carols, “Adeste Fideles.” He published it in his own book in 1751. It was not until a decade later that he added lyrics to his melody. In the next decades it
was thought that John Redding had been the composer of the melody but the finding of Wade’s manuscript voided his claim. It was Maurice Frost who discovered the Wade manuscript.

The song has been associated with Bonnie Price Charles.

Bonnie Prince Charles

Defeated at Culloden in 1746

The story goes that there were lyrics that refer to Charles. Charles was the grandson of James II, the most Catholic of England’s monarchs. Just like the Negro Spiritual the meaning of the words to this hymn are:

“Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels” really means – “come and Behold Him, Born the King of the English-Bonnie Price Charles.” This gives the hymn a clear Jacobite reference to the restoration to the British throne of Charles Edward Stuart-the exiled monarch known as ‘Bonnie Prince Charles.” This true meaning lost its power over the years and is not associated with today’s use of the hymn. Thus the hymn is a distinctive political roots.
How Firm a Foundation

The lyrics were written to the tune the “Portuguese Hymn” c 1780. It has been credited to Marco (real name Simao) Portogalic (Mark the Portugal, the chapel master of the Portuguese King) While the composer of the verses is unknown, it is possible that it is Robert Keene, the musician of Dr. John Rippon’s church in London. Rippon published a manual “A Selection of Hymn from the Best Authors. In it was ‘Fiorm’ without any listing of who the composer was
and only possessing a ‘K’ on the manuscript. This setting of the Portuguese Hymn was the favorite of President Jackson’s wife Deborah.

Angels We Have Heard on High

This carol from France in the 18th century is said to be based on a traditional French carol “Les Anges dans nos Campagnes.” The carol appeared in France in 1855. It was translated into English by James Chadwick in 1862. This carol seemed to appear out of thin air. Its composer is unknown and while it appeared in France its origin is said to be much earlier. Many think that because of the message of the carol that it was written by one closely related to the church, perhaps a monk or priest. The Latin words “Gloria in Excelsis Deo” translate as “Glory to God in the highest.”
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

This song is one of the oldest carols and dates from about the 9th century. It is presumed that a monk wrote the melody as it is a Gregorian chant. Bars lines were not yet used and the complete melody is not divided into equal measures as we know music today. It is from a group called the “Great O’s.”, originally existing in seven different verses and sung after the “Magnificat” on the seven days before Christmas for Vespers.

The use of these verses is the sacred gem of the liturgical service, sung with solemnity in monasteries at Vespers, before and after the “Magnificat” (Mary’s thanksgiving and prayer of praise) These antiphons are exemplified by the Advent hymn, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”. The ‘Great O’s’ antiphons date back to the 6th and 7th centuries, and are named that as each begin with an ‘O.’ We see the appearance of these antiphons turned into a hymn in the 12th century. J. M. Neale, in 1854, translated them from the Latin into English.

Each verse was sung on a different day and each has the Biblical views of the Messiah. The verses bring the Old and New Testaments together as one and in each verse we see the many biblical prophesies fulfilled by Christ’s birth. The verses are a condensed view of the Bible’s view of the Messiah. These lessons were best done by verse and in song since the population of the Middle Ages could not read and their view of Christ’s coming was what they learned in church.

John Mason Neale was the Anglican priest who was responsible for bringing to light the ancient chant “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” in a manuscript called Psalterolum Cantionum Catholicarum.” He was educated at Trinity College in Cambridge and because of his too-progressive thinking was sent to Madeira Island near the northwest coast of Africa. The
melody he used for the text was “Veni Emmanuel.” Each of the seven verses is taken from parts of the Holy Scriptures. While researching this part I found that different people quoted different texts from the Bible that mention the same subject. Below I give one such example.

Verse 1 - Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:23 - Emmanuel-God with us
Verse 2 - Isaiah 11:1-3 – Rod of Jesse
Verse 3 - Zach 6:12 – Radiant dawn
Verse 4 - Isaiah 22:22 – Key of David
Verse 5 – Exodus 20:2 - Adonai
Verse 6 - Prov. 8:22 - Wisdom
Verse 7 – Hag. 2:8 – Ruler of the Nations.

One will find the chant in the book of church music called “The Liber Usualis.” In 1916 the words were translated by Henry Coffin.
**We Three Kings**

This carol was the first renowned carol written by an American – John Henry Hopkins, Jr. (1820-1891). He wrote both the lyrics and the music in 1857. While the bible mentions the Three Kings only briefly, this carol gives a narrative of their journey and their gifts. Hopkins was multi-talented. Living in Pittsburgh PA, he worked as a newspaper reporter, attended law school, edited a religious magazine, designed stained-glass windows, became an ordained Episcopal deacon at the age of 30 and priest at 52.

The Bible only states that ‘wise men’ came to Bethlehem. No mention of the number three; there might have been more who had made the journey from what most people believe was Persia, known today as Iran. The Bible did mention three gifts and it was assumed later that three gifts equal three wise men. These men were really dream interpreters or magi and not kings. The three gifts are said to represent the three areas of Christ’s life: **gold**-his kingly reign; **frankincense**-his ministry; and **myrrh**-his death and resurrection.

The adventures of the Three Wise Men were the focal point of the post-Christmas day of Epiphany, a celebration observed on January 6th, the last of the twelve days of Christmas, the day that the three wise men arrived to find the baby Jesus.

The composer, John Henry Hopkins, Jr., as an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church, decided instead of giving a material gift to his brother’s children to give them one that would show them the real purpose of Christmas and Epiphany. He sat down and, with the quotes from the Bible and using the legends, he wrote a carol about the three wise men. The melody had a hint of the Middle East and a rhythm almost like a march. (I can still remember the assembly at my high school for Christmas when three boys sang the song, each as a soloist on three verses. I had wished I could have been one of those three but I was not gifted with a good solo voice.)
It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Edmund H. Sears was the pastor of the Unitarian church in Wayland MA and editor of The Christian Register. He wrote these words as a poem in 1849. The now-familiar melody was written independently by American Richard S. Willis in 1850, called simply “Carol” for his book, Church Chorales and Choir Studies.

Sears’ lyrics (as a poem) were written for a sermon he was to preach on Christmas Eve 1849. He like so many other Americans was very concerned about the state of the country which even then was so close to civil war. Thinking to uplift his congregation, he prepared to read from the 2nd chapter of Luke: “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified”. The verse moved his emotions and he took up his pen and wrote a five-verse poem. He then remembered another Christmas poem he
had written, went to his file and removed the verse. The words began: “Calm on the listening ear of night come heaven’s melodious strains.” His sermon that day was filled with the spirit of Christmas; to reach out to the poor, to help the nation’s social problems and reflect on the message of Christ in their everyday lives. The lyrics first appeared in *The Christian Register* as “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” on December 29, 1849.

Richard Willis, after studying music in Europe, returned to the US in 1848 and became the music critic for the New York Tribune. He was a pupil of Felix Mendelssohn who had admired Willis and re-orchestrated some of his works. But Willis was believed to have seen a copy of the poem in *The Christian Register* and noticed that the melody he had written fit the poem. There was a later melody set to the poem by Arthur Sullivan in 1874 which usually accompanies the lyrics in England.

World War I had the song reaching France where American soldiers sang it. It seemed to fit the situation and gave the troops a great feeling that there was hope for the end of the war as the carol seemed to be the right one to help their morale. We continue to hope that the message of the carol will reach the hearts of all the people in the world and we will have peace on earth, good will to men.
**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**  
(Mendelssohn-music; Wesley lyrics - 1839) Neither Mendelssohn (a Jew who was converted to Christianity at an early age) nor Wesley (a Methodist, a composer of hundreds of hymns including “Jesus Christ is Risen Today”) consented to have their efforts joined together. This melody is found in a cantata by Mendelssohn from 1840, written to commemorate Johan Gutenberg and his inventing of printing (“Festgesang an die Kunstler”). Mendelssohn strictly instructed that his music was to be used in a purely secular manner. For his part, Wesley had expressed his intentions that his words should be used with only solemn music. The original lyrics were “Hark how all the welkin (meaning Heaven) rings/Glory to the King of Kings. A colleague Calvinist, Whitfield, substituted the familiar lines over the protests of the composers. Dr. William Cummings, in the mid 19th century joined the two together (1855) amidst protests of ‘You got Mendelssohn in my Wesley,’ and “You got Wesley in my Mendelssohn!”, thus thwarting both authors’ wishes. It was first published in a Methodist hymnal in 1857.
The First Noël

From the French word ‘natalis’ meaning birth or birthday. Words first appeared in a collection of Wm. Sandys in 1833. Some say the lyrics were from 16th or 17th century France, with the melody dating from as far back as the 13th century. This carol was connected to the tradition of the Scandinavian Yule log. As the yearly Yule log was lit, the carol “The First Noël” was traditional sung and it was the carol that started the Christmas season.
1. The first No - el the an - gels did say  
   Was to  
2. They look - ed up and saw  
   a star Shin - ing  
3. And by the light of that same star,  
   Three  
4. This star drew nigh to the north-west.  
   O'er  
5. Then en - tered in those Wise - Men three, Full  
   cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay: In fields where they lay  
   in the east be - yond them far, And to the earth it  
   Wise - Men came from coun - try far, To seek for a King was  
   Beth - le - hem it took its rest, And there it did both  
   rev 'rent - ly up on their knee, And offer'd there in  
   keep - ing their sheep On a cold win - ter's night that was so deep.  
   gave great light, And so it con - tin - ued both day and night.  
   their in - tent, And to fol - low the star where - ev - er it went.  
   stop - and stay Right o - ver the place where Je - sus lay.  
   His pres - ence, Their gold and myrrh and frank - incense.  

No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el, Born is the King of Is - ra - el.
The Twelve Days of Christmas

This carol was originally written in England during the time that Catholics were not allowed to worship. The words were written as a lesson to learn the facts of their faith, a sort of catechism lesson for the young. The various symbols spoken about in the carol represent the following: (There are other facts about what the 12 days stand for.)

1st day = The partridge is Jesus (in ancient times the partridge was found as a mythological symbol of a divine king.)
2nd day = The two turtle doves represent the Old and New Testaments of the bible.
3rd day = The three French hens stand for faith, hope and love which are given by the Holy Spirit. (God the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit).
4th day = four calling birds represent the four gospels in the New Testament. These birds are ‘colley birds’ or blackbirds.
5th day = five golden rings represent the first five books of the Bible. This refers to ring-necked birds such as pheasants.
6th day = six geese a-laying stand for the six days of creation.
7th day = even swans a-swimming are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.
8th day = eight maids a-milking are the eight beatitudes.
9th day = nine ladies dancing stand for the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit.
10th day = ten lords a-leaping of course are the ten Commandments.
11th day = eleven pipers piping are the eleven disciples of Jesus.
12th day = twelve drummers drumming are the twelve points of the Apostles Creed.

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

Probably best known for being heard in Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol”, the carol’s meaning is misunderstood. It can be traced back to the 15th century at which time the church was more responsive to the actual feelings of those outside the church’s elite such as the peasants. These peasants began to have their own songs that were much more suited to their
environment then the ‘dark’ and profound music of the church at this time. Thus began the group of more secular music of the Christmas season such as one of the first – “God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen.” Compared to the existing music of the church this song had an upbeat tempo and spoke of the events of the Christmas season in joyful terms. It must have been a shock to those in the elite of the church of the times as the peasants sang and danced to “Merry Gentlemen”. The lyrics were accurate in their telling of the story of Christ and all the meanings of his birth. The hearing of the carol brought forth enthusiasm and happiness that could not be found in the church music of the era. After being sung for centuries it was finally published, thanks to Queen Victoria’s fondness of carols in the 19th century.

The words sung today do not mean the same thing as they did centuries ago. The word ‘merry’ in those days meant ‘great and mighty.’ The word ‘rest’ in those days meant ‘to keep or make’, thus the real title today would be: “God Make You Mighty, Gentlemen.” So when we say “Merry Christmas” we really mean – “the great day of the birth of Christ (Christmas).”

Rest = keep/make, ye = you, merry = great/mighty = God make you mighty, Gentlemen.
1. God rest you merry, gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay, Re-
2. In Bethlehem, in Jewry, This blessed Babe was born, And
3. From God our heavenly Father, A blessed angel came; And
4. The shepherds at these tidings rejoiced much in mind, And

member Christ, our Savior was born on Christmas Day; To
laid within a manger, upon this blessed morn; The
unto certain shepherds, brought tidings of the same: How
left their flocks a feeding, in tempest, storm, and wind: And

CHORUS

save us all from Satan's power, When we were gone astray.
which His Mother Mary, Did nothing take in scorn. O tidings of
that in Bethlehem was born, The Son of God by Name.
went to Bethlehem straight-way, The Son of God to find.

comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy.
Lo, How A Rose E’er Blooming

First published around 1582, the focus of this hymn initially was Mary. In the hymn she was compared to the mystical rose in the Song of Solomon 2:11 “I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” One story tells how a monk in Trier, Germany, looked upon a blooming rose while walking in the woods. He took the rose and placed it in a vase before the altar to the Virgin Mary where it continued to bloom.

When the Protestants adopted the hymn they changed its focus to Jesus, citing Isaiah 11:1. The most famous revision, in 1609, was by the Renaissance composer, Michael Praetorius (1571-1621). The best-known English-language adaptation is by Theodore Baker (1851-1934) “Lo, How A Rose E’er Blooming”. ‘Lo’ means ‘look’ in Old English.

Michael Praetorius was the pseudonym of Michael Schultheib (German for ‘mayor,’ in Latin - Praetorius). Born in Germany he worked as master of various royal courts’ music and became one of the most prominent musicians of his era. He was not only a composer but a musicologist. His use of harmony was a very progressive.
**Joy to the World - 1822**

Words taken by Isaac Watts from Psalm 98 of the Bible in 1719. Lowell Mason wrote the music and attributed it to his hero, Handel. One hundred years later dedicated musicologists were not able to find any link between the piece and Handel’s music.

The song is really an Advent hymn. Isaac Watts, when he was eighteen years old, criticized the hymns he heard and sang in church. He began to write a hymn a week when his father challenged him. For twenty-two weeks in 1822, he wrote a new hymn. This poem was sung to different tunes until 1839 when Lowell Mason, the famous American musician and teacher, added a melody. Although he remarked that the tune was from Handel’s music, he had written this melody himself.

Isaac Watts was a non-conformist and might be called a radical today. Inspired by the same characteristics of his father and displaying a great intellect, and because he was a member of the Congregational Church, he went to the Independent Academy at Stoke, Newington, England. He did well in his studies, having very strong potential for learning, and after studying Greek, Hebrew and Latin, returned home to live with his family. He also found church music of his day uninspired and monotonous. This was the reason, after a challenge from his father, to begin to write new, controversial hymns, these being met with contempt. He would later become the minister of the Mark Lane Independent Chapel in London.

Isaac married a woman, Elizabeth Singer, when she proposed to him by mail, being an ardent fan of his music. The marriage did help Isaac to concentrate on his music but it did not last. After she left him she remarked: “He was only five feet tall, with a shallow face and a hooked nose, prominent cheek bones, small eyes and a deathlike color. (So much for mail brides.) Watts threw himself into his work and never again sought the companionship of a woman. It was from the inspiration when reading Psalm 98 that he penned his famous song. Isaac had dared to rewrite some of the phrases of the Psalms so the British public did not embrace the song. Eventually he would be successful in bringing music to the common man and was one of those responsible for a revolution in modern Christian musical thinking.

Forty-four years later in America Lowell Mason was born. As a young man, in 1812 he moved to Savannah, Georgia and became a banker, thinking that he could not make a living writing music. He tried to get some classical music published that he had written but was rejected. He began to write music that the public would accept. To his surprise by 1827 he had sold 50,000 copies of the songbook he had compiled. This encouraged him to move to New England and soon was an established entity in the musical community. Probably his most important activity was establishing music in public schools. He continued to write more than 600 hymns which included “Nearer My God to Thee.” Mason wrote the melody which was claimed inspired by Handel’s “Messiah.” He called it “Antioch.” Three years later while reading the book “Modern Psalmist”, Mason saw the Isaac Watts poem which fit his music perfectly.

Again a carol inspired another modern song. “Joy to the World (All the Boys and Girls)”. The earlier feelings were echoed in this song with the same title by the group Three Dog Night. Like “Jingle Bells”, this song is not really a Christmas song but could be sung year-round. The public may think of it as a Christmas song although it echoes the feeling that man should exude love and joy each and every day of the year.
Away in a Manger

This carol is the only one that seems to have two well-accepted melodies associated with it. One tune is that of “Flow Gently Sweet Afton”. It was during World War I that this tune was first used in the singing of “Manger.” Earlier, it had been sung with another melody, one for which the composer is not known.

The carol was not written by Martin Luther as many believed including James Murray, a musician who first gave Luther credit for its authorship. The first two verses were written in
the mid-1800’s by an anonymous American writer. It has been sung by children and passed on orally for decades.

1. Away in a manger, no crib for His bed, The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head. The stars in the sky, looked down where He makes; I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the lay, The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

2. The cattle are lowing, the poor Baby loo, Loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, Loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo, loo.
Second of two versions of Carol (to the tune of “Flow Gently Sweet Afton”)
**O Little Town of Bethlehem - 1868**

One of the true inspirations felt by the poet Phillips Brooks on Christmas Eve after a journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in 1865. He wrote:

“I remember standing in the old church in Bethlehem, close to the spot where Jesus was born, when the whole church was ringing hour after hour with splendid hymns of praise to God, how again and again it seemed as if I could hear voices I knew well, telling each other of the Wonderful Night of the Savior’s birth.”

After this moving experience in the holy places around Jerusalem he returned home but it was not until 1868 that he wrote the poem. It was sung that year at Christmas Service with music by the church organist Lewis H. Redner. Of the writing Redner said:

“As Christmas of 1868 approached, Mr. Brooks (Pastor of Trinity Church in Poston [BOSTON?], Mass.) told me that he had written a simple little carol for the Christmas Sunday-school service, and he asked me to write the tune to it. The simple music was written in great haste and under great pressure. We were to practice it on the following Sunday. Mr. Brooks came to me on Friday and said, ‘Redner, have you ground out that music yet to “O Little Town of Bethlehem”? I replied, ‘No,’ but that he should have it by Sunday. On the Saturday night my brain was all confused about the tune. I thought more about my Sunday-school lesson than I did about the music. But I was roused from sleep late in the night, hearing an angel-strain whispering in my ear. Seizing a piece of music paper, I jotted down the treble of the tune as we now have it, and on Sunday morning before going to church I filled in the harmony. Neither Mr. Brooks nor I ever thought the carol or the music to it would live beyond that Christmas of 1868”.

[I CHANGED THE ORDER BELOW BECAUSE LINCOLN’S FUNERAL WAS IN 1865.]

¶Pastor Brooks was one of the most loved and successful clergymen of his day. Despite his many Sundays of sermons, before giving the speech at President Lincoln’s funeral, Brooks toiled over how he could relate his spiritual experience in Bethlehem, but as some of us know, he chose to “say it with music.” His emotional feelings about his experiences when he walked where the Lord had walked were brought home by the beautiful melody that Redner had written.

In the following years the hymn made steady progress and eventually was included in the official hymnal of the Episcopal Church. While popular in Philadelphia it wasn’t until Brook’s death in 1893 that the carol became a beloved Christmas carol. In his era Brooks was considered one of the era’s great orators but will be remembered not for his speeches but for a simple little carol about the town of Bethlehem.
1. O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie;
   Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by.
   Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light;
   The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee to-night.

2. For Christ is born of Mary; And gathered all above,
   While mortals sleep, the angels keep Their watch of wondering love.
   O morning stars, together Proclaim the holy birth;
   And praises sing to God, the King, And peace to men on earth.

3. How silently, how silently, The wondrous Gift is given!
   So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of His heav'n.
   No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin,
   Where meek souls will receive Him, still, The dear Christ enters in.

4. O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
   Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today.
   We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell;
   O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel.
Coventry Carol

A pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors Guild in Coventry, England, was based on biblical stories and used this carol. Its melody dates to the 15th century. No composer is known and the first written music was by Robert Croo in 1534. In this play the women of Bethlehem sing this lullaby just before Herod’s soldiers come to slaughter their children in retribution for his being tricked by the Three Wise Men. The carol has seen many variations through the centuries but retains its original message.

Good King Wenceslas - 1853

The music is from a 13th century melody. The words were by John Mason Neale, originally sung to a traditional folk tune. It was written in the English town of East Grinstead at Sackville. There was a real King Wenceslas, actually a duke and patron saint of the Czech Republic.
Neale was a patron of ancient songs and while working he read the story of Wenceslas. He thought it would be a good story to teach children morals. He put the tale to verse and used the Latin melody “Tempus Adest Floridum” as the melody.

The mother of Wenceslas, Drahomira, known as a witch, made persecuting Christians one of her main goals in life. When he became the age of ascension to the throne, he ousted his mother and left the Christians in peace. His grandmother had raised him as a Christian. She was murdered by the guards of his mother so he had bishops smuggled in at night to teach him the Bible. Upon gaining the throne he put in a good education system and a successful law-and-order system.

Four years into his reign, his twin brother, Boleslaus, very jealous of Wenceslas, plotted with the pagans and his mother and invited Wenceslas to a celebration of a new chapel. When Wenceslas entered the chapel the doors were suddenly locked and his enemies stabbed the king to death. So, many of the parts of the carol are true – he was indeed a kind king although his reign was short in length. The good king remains today the role model for Santa Claus.
I Saw Three Ships

In the original version of this carol there were three ships that were taking the skulls of the three wise men to Cologne Cathedral in Germany. The most well-known theme is about Mary and Jesus traveling to Bethlehem. As traveling minstrels sang, the story developed and evolved into the words we know today.

The story began with Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine. When she was eighty years old she traveled to Palestine in charge of a mission to gather Christian relics. Helena is credited with the discovery of the true Christian cross and other Christian relics. This was in 327-328 A.D. Because of her religious work she was declared a saint and
her feast day is either May 21 (Eastern Orthodox Church) or August 18th in the Western church. She is considered the patron saint of archaeologists. Thus through the centuries it is now about three ships sailing, on Christmas Day, to Bethlehem. On board is the Holy Family. This tune has been compared with the melody of the children’s nursery rhyme “Mulberry Bush” a tune that appears centuries later.

What Child is This (Greensleeves)

This carol is the story of the combining of a profound text to an Elizabethan folk song. The poet, William Chatterton Dix was named after Chatterton, one of England’s greatest poets. His father had written a biography of the poet and had encouraged his son to follow in the great man’s footsteps. Dix was born in England in 1837 and began his adult career as an insurance manager. However, he seemed to have spent more time writing poetry than as an insurance man. No one knows why Dix chose to write a very profound poem on the birth of Christ, in a time when the church was the strict patron that controlled the norms and customs of society. NO ¶ This carol was one of the first to depict the nativity scene, the wise men, shepherds, etc.

¶He called the poem “The Manger Throne”. The poem became popular in England and the United States around the end of the American Civil War. An unknown Englishman used the old folk song and united it with the poem. It became a Christmas classic before Dix died in 1898.
The poem was written by Longfellow on Christmas Day in 1864. The poem was written about Civil War times some four months before the end of the war. Some new words were added and the poem was obsolete within a year as the dark and uncertain times of the war came to an end. Sorrowing over the war he wrote: “For hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men”. As he bowed his head in despair, he suddenly was filled with God’s peace. The last verse is very apropos:

“Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail
With peace on earth, good will to men.”

The poem has been set to music in several variations over the decades. The one we are familiar with today was composed in 1872 by John Calkin.

There is much more to the story of Longfellow’s poem. In March of 1863, Charles Appleton Longfellow, the elder son of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, left unannounced from his home in Cambridge, MA, and joined the Union Army. The poet who had lost his wife in a fire in 1861 finally gave permission for Charles to become a private in the 1st Massachusetts Artillery. After trying to get his son a commission he found out that his son had already been made a 2nd Lieutenant.
Charles had been in combat, was shot in the left shoulder and missed being paralyzed by less than an inch. After this experience of his son’s wartime ordeal, Longfellow gave thanks for his survival and penned the famous poem as “Christmas Bells”. Two original verses, now omitted, show that this was a Civil War poem and not really a Christmas carol.

“Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the south,
And with the sound the carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

“And in despair I bowed my head:
“There is no peace on earth,” I said.
“For hate is strong, and mocks the song,
Of peace on earth, good will to men!”

Charles Appleton Longfellow was surely “the Christmas Carol Soldier.” (Loyal Legion Historical Journal, 1998)
Another carol that is not religious in its message but more secular and gay is ‘Deck the Halls.’ The tune is said to have originated in Wales in the 16th Century. Its use of the repetitious ‘Fa-la-la-la-la’ is in the vernacular of the Middle Ages, especially in the well-known style of the madrigals. Mozart has quoted the melody in a duet for violin and piano.
Carol of the Bells

This carol comes from the Ukraine, written by Mykola Leontovich and called “Shchedryk” It was first performed at Kiev University in 1916 and premiered in the United States at Carnegie Hall in 1921. The carol was commissioned by choir director Oleksander Koshys and was to be based on Ukrainian folk melodies. Among these folk songs was one sung on January 13th (their New Year’s Eve) and usually sung by adolescent girls going house
to house in celebration of the New Year. (Did our custom of ‘trick or treat’ descend from this practice?)

Upon hearing the work, arranger Peter Wilhousky thought it reminded him of bells. He published new lyrics to the song in 1936. Because of these lyrics the carol began to be associated with Christmas.

The original lyrics tell of a swallow flying into a household to sing of wealth that will come with the following spring. Originally it was sung on January 13 – the Ukrainian New Year. The original lyrics:

A little swallow flew into the household and started to twitter
“Come out, come out, o master of the household
Look at the cattle-pen, there the ewes are nestling
And the lambkin have been born
Your goods belonging are great.
You will have a lot of money, by selling them
If not money, then chaff from the grain you will harvest.
You have a dark-haired wife.
Shchedryk, Shchedryk, a Shchedrivka … a little swallow flew.
Do You Hear What I Hear - Noel Rigney and Gloria Shayne

This Christmas song has an interesting inception as written in 1962 by Noel Rigney and Gloria Shayne (his wife and the composer of the melody) while living in New York City.

Noel, a Frenchman, was forced into the Nazi army during World War II. He escaped to France and joined the French resistance. After the war he came to America and saw a beautiful woman playing the piano at New York’s Beverly Hotel. Within a month they were married. Gloria was writing ‘rock and roll’ music while Noel wanted a career writing classical music. In 1962 Gloria had a hit at the top of the charts, “Goodbye Cruel World’ as sung by James Darren.

One day, Noel was walking home in a depressed mood: “I saw two mothers with their babies in strollers. The babies were looking at each other and smiling. All of a sudden, my mood was extraordinary.” Inspired, he wrote the lyrics and handed them to his wife, Gloria Shayne, who then wrote the music. Gloria had read over the lyrics and was thinking of the first few lines while shopping at Bloomingdale’s. When she got home she played a melody for her husband. She had added a word to a line “Said the night wind to the little lamb.” It worked out.
Gloria thought another line should be changed - “…with a tail as big as a kite.” This time Noel was right because the line was loved by all who heard it.

They then took it to the Regent Publishing Company, a firm run by the brothers of Benny Goodman. The publishers liking it wanted and Harry Simeone to hear it. A few days later, the Harry Simeone Chorale recorded it. When released just before Thanksgiving 1962, the song strongly affected those who heard it. This was the era of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the song had a message of peace that was heeded throughout the world.

The song has been successfully recorded by many artists over the decades since. Today, Gloria can no longer play the piano because of an operation and Noel recently had a stroke and can no longer talk. But their song continues to inspire the hearts of the citizens of the world to bring the thought of peace to all the earth.

\[image\]

**Under Copyright**

**The Birthday of a King**

While Neidlinger’s main interest was working with retarded children, he also composed and played organ. This carol was published in 1912 and is a very dramatic composition – not folk-like as we find in some other carols.
‘Wassail’ originally meant “be in good health”, (“be thou hale” in Middle English). It became the name of a drink of ale, cider and/or wine sweetened with sugar and flavored with citrus and spices floated on toast in the Wassail Bowl. It was used by the Druids as a custom of wassailing (to wish health to) the apple trees, along with drums, bells, and chants to scare away the evil spirits or wake up the tree each year.

The feeling of charity of a person is heightened during the Christmas season and it was no different in the old English era. Beggars and orphans would dance their way around the snowy streets of England, offering to entertain the people with songs of good cheer and to predict good fortune for the households they sang for. The householder would give them either a drink from his wassail bowl or perhaps a penny or even a pork pie, and at times would
extend the offer to warm themselves before his hearth. The wassail bowl contained just enough alcohol to warm the fingers and feet of the singers.

\[\text{Here we come a-wassailing.} \]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Words Traditional.} \\
\text{Trebble Solo.}
\end{align*}\]

\[\text{NEW YEAR.} \quad \text{Traditional (Yorkshire).} \]

\[\text{Here we come a-wassailing Among the leaves so green; Here we come a-}
\]

\[\text{wandering, So fair to be seen; Love and joy}
\]

\[\text{you your wassail, too,}
\]

\[\text{come to you, And God bless you and send you a happy New Year.}
\]

\[\text{poco rit. e dim.} \]

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

The melody was taken from an old Negro spiritual “When I was a Seeker.” The tune has similarities to “Oh, Susanna” and “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching,” by George F. Root.

The birth of a savior was welcomed by black slaves who thought they would be set free and truly have something to sing about. Just as Jesus chose a mountain to deliver his sermons, there was no better place to shout their own ‘Sermo on the Mountain’. It was first popularized by the Fisk University Jubilee Singers around 1879.

¶ This song and other Negro spirituals were uncovered by John Wesley Work by going directly to the old Negro slaves still living. He had them sing the spirituals that they had sung in church during slavery. It was the only Christmas spiritual that so far has been discovered. It was a song that was passed on from generation to generation by the slaves in the fields. John Wesley Work II and Frederick Work arranged the spiritual into a workable song for the Fisk Jubilee Singers who brought it to the world on their various tours throughout the world. The song was first published in 1909 in the *Religious Folk Songs of the Negro as Sung on the Plantations*. 
O Tannenbaum

In German, a ‘tannenbaum’ is a fir tree and translated into English is a Christmas tree. This old melody has been used with a number of different lyrics. The most familiar is its use as the state song of Maryland with words written in 1861. In 1939 the song was adopted as the state song.

James Ryder Randall wrote the lyrics for “Maryland, My Maryland” using “O Tannenbaum” as the melody. Randall, a native Marylander, was teaching in Louisiana at the time of the riot in Baltimore, the first bloodshed of the Civil War. The words were first published in the New Orleans Sunday Delta on April 26, 1861. In the beginnings of jazz the tune was a favorite of early jazzmen.
The Holly and the Ivy

The song was first published in a collection in “Joshua Sylvester’s Christmas Carols (1861). The text had come from a broadside of around 1710, which is as far back as the song can be traced. A holly tree is one of the oldest Christian symbols. The holly tree was known to medieval monks as the “Holy Tree” because it was believed to help keep evil spirits away, and to protect a home from lightning. During the month of the feast of Saturnalia, the Romans decorated their hallways with garlands of holly. It was also the sign of eternal life. The red berries symbolize the drops of blood shed by Jesus and the pointed leaves represent the crown of thorns worn by Jesus. It also came to represent the burning bush from which God spoke to Moses. Holly is usually put up in a house before Christmas Eve and removed on Twelfth Night. When sent as a bouquet of flowers it symbolizes domestic happiness. The familiar melody was first published by the folklorist Cecil Sharp in 1911.
The Echo Carol, (While by My Sheep) - 1625

This 17th century carol by Nach Friedrich von Spee is noted for its use of an echo. In the 16th century ‘echoes’ appeared in the works of Josquin and his followers and it was the end of the 16th century that the echo effect was exploited as a source of musical style. The great Lassus used the effect in his Libro de Villanelle (1581). Composers of the era - Sweelinck, Scheidt, and others - used the effect in their work. The famous composer of his day, Carissimi,
used the effect in his oratorio *Jephtha*. Even the great J. S. Bach used the echo effect in the last movement of his French Overture (1735). Mozart, Wagner, and Beethoven all used the effect in some of their works.

Theodore Baker (1851-1934) wrote three carols – “Carol of the Bagpipers,” “While by My Sheep,” and an adaptation of “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming.” Eventually the people who heard “While by My Sheep” called it “The Echo Carol.” As usual this carol had had several tunes used before the one we know today. This carol reminds me of two modern compositions: Leroy Anderson uses the effect in “The Trumpeters Lullaby,” and in a song my mother used to sing to me entitled “Little Sir Echo.”

![Image of sheet music for Echo Carol]

**We Wish You a Merry Christmas**

In the era that we call Merrie Olde England live music was the only kind and music was used for various activities that we take for granted today. Musicians at that time were called ‘waits’ and were licensed to provide music for all occasions – to greet visiting dignitaries, to play for weddings, sing or play out the hours of night and day and to serenade the rich on special holidays or events. During the Christmas season they would wander around singing and
playing the story of the Nativity. In return they would receive coins or a bit of fig pudding, spiced ale or even roasted pig. Many of the early carolers were ‘waits’ and one of their carols was ‘We Wish You a Merry Christmas. The composer is unknown and this carol might have been improvised as this was the greeting heard around town.

**Ding, Dong! Merrily on High**

Carols were originally danced to and this tune first appeared in the *Orchesographie*, a book that illustrates various dance steps of the era. It was written by Johan Tabourot (1519-1593) and was one of the most important scholarly works of his day. The tune appeared as a canon by Thoinot Arbeau’s “Branle l’Officiel.” This type of dance was danced by the more gentile when those of gentle birth masqueraded as peasants and shepherds. Lyrics were added in the 20th century by George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848-1934). The main characteristic of the dance was to throw the women partner up in the air who, turning in the air, lands with a new partner.
I Wonder as I Wander

This song was collected by John Jacob Niles (1892-1980) while on a research trip in Murphy, North Carolina in 1933. It is said that Niles had given a young women evangelist, Annie Morgan, twenty-five cents to sing it for him. Her performance of the song was repeated numerous times (for about an hour) until Niles had written the correct notes down on music paper. No one can know how old the song is since most folk songs were passed from generation to generation. Niles published the song in his 1934 Songs of the Hill-Folk.
Patapatapan – c. 1700

This tune is either a traditional folk tune or an original tune written by Burgundian Bernard de la Monnoye (1641-1728). Burgundy, a region in eastern France, was known for a type of wine and a special area for the development of carols.

The traditional names used, Guillo and Robin, are stock characters signifying ‘the whole village.’ The ‘tamborin’ mentioned is a small drum held with a strap on the shoulder and the ‘fleute’ is probably a fife. The word ‘turelurelu’ describes the sound of the fife, and ‘patapatapan’ is the sound made by the drum. This carol was written around 1700. The style of the use of a ‘drummer boy’ is a predecessor of the more recent carol, “The Little Drummer Boy.” It is one of the carols used in the Christmas midnight mass. One of the carol’s first appearances was in the ‘Noël Borguignon’ of 1701. It was modernized and included in William Sandys’s “Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern” of 1883. It probably was used primarily for accompanying the dance during the Middle Ages.
While Shepherds Watch their Flocks By Night

This carol was written by Nahum Tate. It was first heard in America as Daniel Reed’s “Sherburne. There are other melodies to this theme. Tate was born in Mass. In 1757.

Many lyrics to folk songs and hymns are set to different tunes. In Canterbury a shoemaker Thomas Clark in 1905 set a lyric called ‘On Likley Moor Baht Hat (On Likley Moor without a hat). It is set to the tune of Cranbrook the tune of “While Shepherds....” The lyrics tell of a lover courting the object of is affections Mary Jane on the Moor of Likley. He was not wearing a hat and his lady chides him for his lack of headwear and said: Not wearing a hat would mean his death by exposure resulting in his burial, then the worms would eat his corpse, the worms would be eaten by ducks and finally they would eat the ducks.
Where hast thou been since I saw thee? On Likley Moor baht 'at;
Where hast thou been since I saw thee? Where hast thou been since I saw thee?
On Likley Moor baht 'at  On Likley Moor baht 'at  On Likley Moor baht 'at.

On Likley Moor Baht Hat

While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks by Night
Auld Lang Syne

The melody is an old Scottish melody found in the “Bannatyne Manuscript” of 1568 in the Scottish Museum. The phrase ‘Auld Land Syne’ is attributed to the court poet, Sir Robert Ayton (1570-1638). Poet Robert Burns is given credit for adding verses and bringing the old poem to the attention of the public. It has since become known throughout the world in most cultures, some using it in different ways than in America. The phrase ‘Auld Lang Syne’ translated means ‘time goes by’ or ‘old long since’, the words is being nostalgic about old friends either gone or whom one hasn’t seen in a long time.

Over the River and Through the Woods

The lyrics refer to an actual house but it is not clear whether the house is called “Grandfather’s” or “Grandmother’s” house since there are two versions of the lyrics. The house is located at 114 South Street, Medford, Mass. The original farmhouse was the house
that Child recalled in her poem. The river was the Mystic River and the woods have long vanished to modern buildings.

Lydia Maria Child was born in Medford, MA in 1802. She went to live with her brother Convers, a Unitarian minister. She wrote a novel, “Hobomok,” which depicted early American life, finishing it in only six weeks. She married lawyer David Child who had a reputation in politics and was extravagant with the couple’s money, which was mostly hers from her literary works. With her success in writing she began her own political interests which condemned the mistreatment of Indians by both the English and Spanish colonists. She became one of the earliest women to earn a living from her writing. During her career she was known for her book, “The Frugal Housewife.” She then turned to anti-slavery causes and published numerous writings. Her most important contribution to history was “The Appeal” but it was her little poem about winter holidays that is far better known.

Her most famous poem (“Over the River…”) was found in “Flowers for Children, Vol. 2 in 1944.

Lydia Maria Child  
Grandfather’s House as it appears today

Over the river, and through the wood,  
to Grandfather’s house we go;  
the horse knows the way to carry the sleigh  
through the white and drifted snow.

Over the river, and through the wood,  
to Grandfather’s house away!  
We would not stop for doll or top,  
for ‘tis Thanksgiving Day.

Over the river, and through the wood—  
oh, how the wind does blow!  
It stings the toes and bites the nose,  
as over the ground we go.

Over the river, and through the wood  
and straight through the barnyard gate.  
We seem to go extremely slow—  
it is so hard to wait!

Over the river, and through the wood—  
when Grandmother sees us come,  
She will say, "o, dear, the children are here,  
bring a pie for every one."

Over the river, and through the wood—  
now Grandmothers cap I spy!  
Hurrah for the fun! Is the pudding done?  
Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!
Most Wonderful Time of the Year

This holiday song was written by Wyle when he was musical director of the Andy Williams TV variety show. Wyle was born Bernard Weissman. He and Eddie Pola wrote this song for Andy Williams in 1963. But this was not his most famous song – that was the theme for the TV show Gilligan’s Island.

An Original Christmas Carol I wrote for you.

“A Little Boy Came to Bethlehem Town”
Merry Christmas, To All

A Little Boy Came To Bethlehem Town
K. Koenig

(Verse)
A little boy came to Bethlehem town, in the cold and wintry night, the snow was cold and the wind was cold and the little baby cried. A

Fine (3rd time)

bright the the night that Jesus came to town and the winds blew up and the

(Chorus)

winds blew down and the little baby slept so still as the star upon the hill, the

(Outro)

Merry Christmas, Dr. Karl Koenig
Appendix I

It is well documented that a large number of popular songwriters were Jewish. Perhaps the most well known songwriter that was not Jewish was Cole Porter. Nate Bloom researched the number of Jewish songwriters that wrote Christmas or holiday songs. Perhaps the most famous Jewish composer was Irving Berlin. A Russian Jewish immigrant Berlin wrote the two most popular holidays songs – White Christmas and Easter Parade.

Bloom gives the list of ASCAP’s list of the most popular Christmas songs and we find that 12 out of the 25 most popular holiday songs were written by Jewish composers. (This list is given at the beginning of this book. (I give the songs written by Jewish composers: (An * are the songs written by Jewish songwriters.)

*Winter Wonderland
The composer, Felix Bernard was Jewish. Bernard’s given name was Bernhardt, the song of Jewish immigrants from Germany and and their mother tongue was given as Yiddish.

*The Christmas Song
Mel Torme was the son of Russian Jewish immigrants. Ironically, this song was written in July in the hot desert of California.

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas
Ralph Blane and Hugh Martin were probably not Jewish

*Sleigh Ride
Composer Leroy Anderson was not Jewish but the lyric writer Mitchell Parish was. Parish was born Michael Myman Pashelinsky in Lithuania. His family moved to Shreveport, Louisiana where the counties of the state were known as parishes.

*Santa Claus is Coming to Town
The religion of composer Fred Coots is said to have been Jewish but that fact is not verified. In a university seminar it was said that Coots was Jewish.

*Let it Snow! Let it Snow
This song was written in1945 by the Jewish songwriting team oof Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne. (Cahn’s given name was Cohen.Styne was born in London to Jewish parents from the Ukraine. The duo also wrote the “Christmas Waltz.”)
**White Christmas**
Perhaps the most popular Christmas song, it was written by Irving Berlin (Israel Baline) born in what is now Russia. He took the name ‘Berlin’ as that spelling of his name appeared on the cover of his first published tune. It is ironic that Christmas was a sad day for Berlin as one of his children died on Christmas day.

**Jingle Bell Rock**
Joseph Carleton Beal and James Ross Boothe are not thought to be Jewish. This song was the only ‘hit’ for these two.

**Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer**
Johnny Marks was Jewish and Rudolph remains one of the most popular secular Christmas songs of all time.

**Little Drummer Boy**
Katherine K. Davis was the composer and was not Jewish

**It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year.**
The composer, George Wyle was born Bernard Weissman in New York City and is Jewish. He also wrote the music for Gilligan’s Island (the lyrics to this song was by Sherwood Schwarts, the show’s Jewish creator.)

**Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree**
Johnny Marks (Rudolph) also wrote this song in 1958.

**Silver Bells**
Written by the Jewish songwriting team of Jay Livingston and Ray Evans. Livingston was born Jacob Levinson. (According to ASCAP the most popular recording of the song was by Kenny G, who is Jewish.)

**I’ll Be Home for Christmas**
The duo of Walter Kent and Buck Ram were both Jewish. The other cowriter-Kim Gannon was not Jewish. Kent was born Walter Kauffman Kent’s other hit was “White Cliffs of Dover.”

**Feliz Navidad**
The composer, Jose Feliciano is not Jewish

**Frosty the Snowman**
The composers Steve Nelson and Walter E. Rollins were not Jewish.

**A Holly Jolly Christmas**
Another Christmas song written by Johnny Marks who also wrote Rudolph and was Jewish.
It’s Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas
Meredith Willson (The Music Man) was not Jewish

Blue Christmas
It is not known if Billy Hayes or Jay W. Johnson were Jewish.

*There’s No Place Like Home For the Holidays
Bob Allen was not Jewish but the lyricist Al Stillman was Jewish. Stillman wrote the words to the song “I Believe.”

I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus
Songwriter Tommie Connor was not Jewish.

Here Comes Santa Claus
Gene Autry was not Jewish

Carol of the Bells
Both the composer and lyricist (Peter J. Wilhousky and Mykola Leontovich) were not Jewish. Bloom states that “Given the opportunities Jewish songwriters found in America—and the horrors they left in Europe—they must have felt an openness towards the Christmas spirit that their Old World forebears didn’t—and it was very profitable to have a ‘hit’ Christmas song which in many cases became a ‘standard’ song of the Christmas season.