



Christmas in United States of America

Santa Claus was born in US in the 1860's he was named this as he had a white beard and a belly, so he was named Santa Claus as this was the Dutch word for St Nicholas, Sintaklaas. Although the Dutch had bought him with them in the 17th century, he did not become an important person at Christmas until the Novelist Washington Irving put him in a novel that he wrote in 1809. This first Santa Claus was still known as St. Nicholas, he did smoke a pipe, and fly around in a wagon without any reindeer, but he did not have his red suit or live at the North Pole, he did however bring presents to children every year.

In 1863 He was given the name Santa Claus and bore the red suit, pipe, and his reindeer and sleigh.

Now Christmas celebrations vary greatly between regions of the United States, because of the variety of nationalities which have settled in it.

In Pennsylvania, the Moravians build a landscape, called a putz - under the Christmas tree, while in the same state the Germans are given gifts by Belsnickle, who taps them with his switch if they have misbehaved.

Early European settlers brought many traditions to the United States. Many settled in the early days in the South, these settlers would send Christmas greetings to their distant neighbors by shooting firearms and letting off fireworks. In Hawaii this practice is still in use as under the sunny skies, Santa Claus arrives by boat and Christmas dinner is eaten outdoors.

In Alaska, a star on a pole is taken from door to door, followed by Herod's Men, who try to capture the star. Colonial doorways are often decorated with pineapple, a symbol of hospitality.

In Alaska, boys and girls with lanterns on poles carry a large figure of a star from door to door. They sing carols and are invited in for supper.

In Washington D.C., a huge, spectacular tree with Christmas ornaments is lit ceremoniously when the President presses a button and turns on the tree's lights.

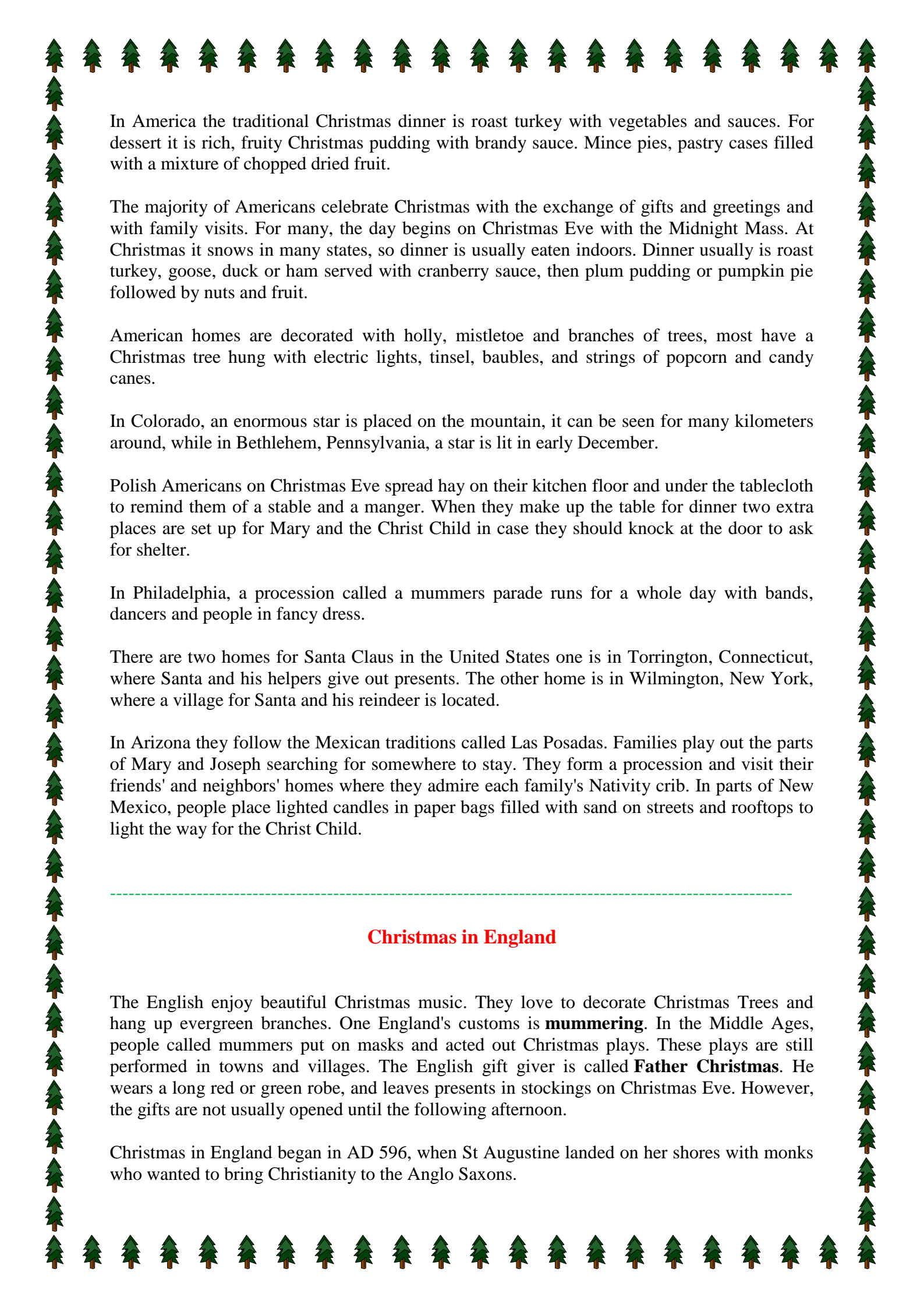
In Boston, carol singing festivities are famous. The singers are accompanied by hand bells.

In New Orleans, a huge ox is paraded around the streets decorated with holly and with ribbons tied to its horns.

In Arizona, the Mexican ritual called Las Posadas is kept up. This is a ritual procession and play representing the search of Mary and Joseph for a room at the inn. Families play the parts and visit each other's houses enacting and re-enacting the drama and, at the same time, having a look at each family's crib.

In Hawaii, Christmas starts with the coming of the Christmas Tree Ship, which is a ship bringing a great load of Christmas fare. Santa Claus also arrives by boat.

In California, Santa Claus sweeps in on a surf board.



In America the traditional Christmas dinner is roast turkey with vegetables and sauces. For dessert it is rich, fruity Christmas pudding with brandy sauce. Mince pies, pastry cases filled with a mixture of chopped dried fruit.

The majority of Americans celebrate Christmas with the exchange of gifts and greetings and with family visits. For many, the day begins on Christmas Eve with the Midnight Mass. At Christmas it snows in many states, so dinner is usually eaten indoors. Dinner usually is roast turkey, goose, duck or ham served with cranberry sauce, then plum pudding or pumpkin pie followed by nuts and fruit.

American homes are decorated with holly, mistletoe and branches of trees, most have a Christmas tree hung with electric lights, tinsel, baubles, and strings of popcorn and candy canes.

In Colorado, an enormous star is placed on the mountain, it can be seen for many kilometers around, while in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a star is lit in early December.

Polish Americans on Christmas Eve spread hay on their kitchen floor and under the tablecloth to remind them of a stable and a manger. When they make up the table for dinner two extra places are set up for Mary and the Christ Child in case they should knock at the door to ask for shelter.

In Philadelphia, a procession called a mummers parade runs for a whole day with bands, dancers and people in fancy dress.

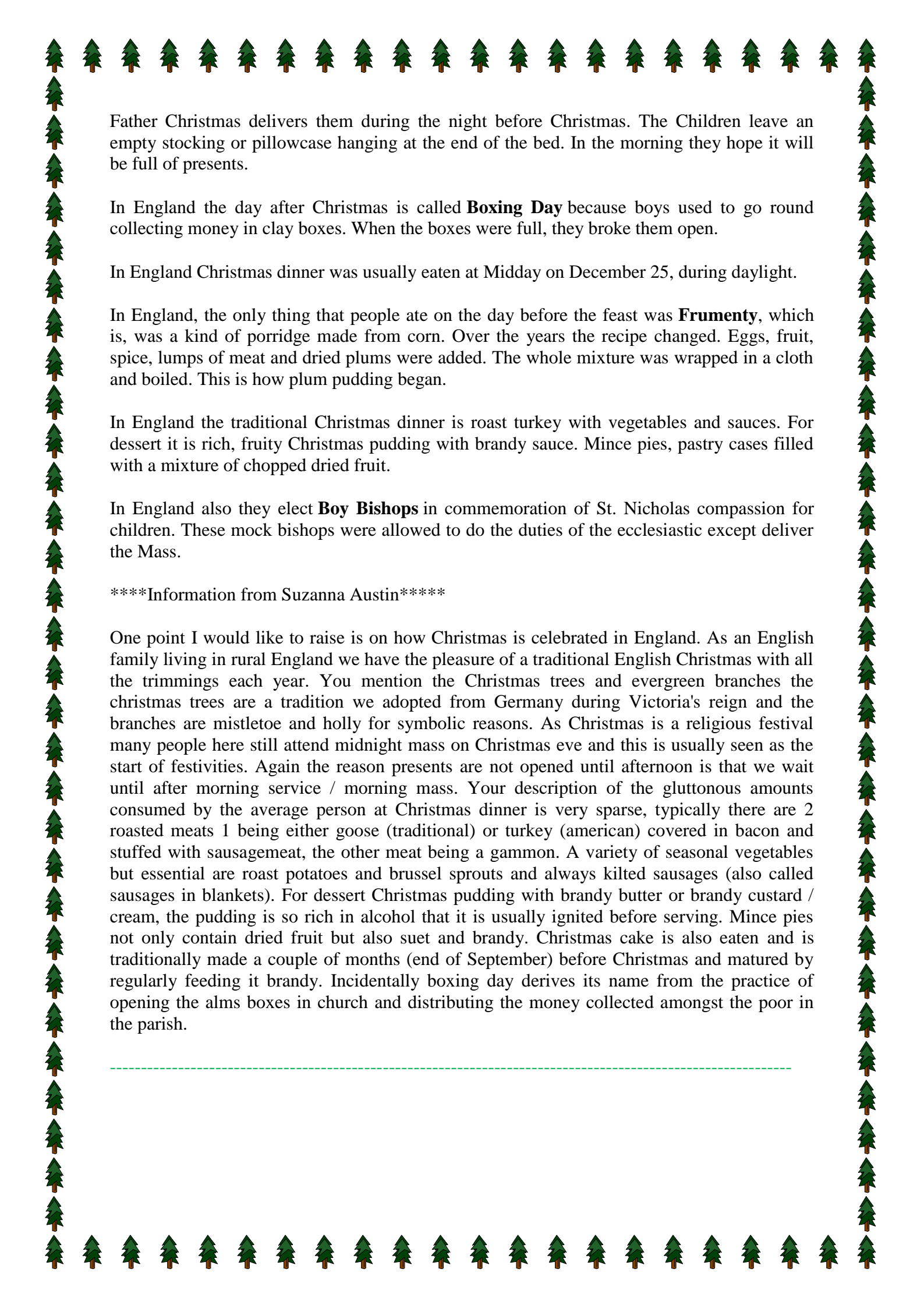
There are two homes for Santa Claus in the United States one is in Torrington, Connecticut, where Santa and his helpers give out presents. The other home is in Wilmington, New York, where a village for Santa and his reindeer is located.

In Arizona they follow the Mexican traditions called Las Posadas. Families play out the parts of Mary and Joseph searching for somewhere to stay. They form a procession and visit their friends' and neighbors' homes where they admire each family's Nativity crib. In parts of New Mexico, people place lighted candles in paper bags filled with sand on streets and rooftops to light the way for the Christ Child.

Christmas in England

The English enjoy beautiful Christmas music. They love to decorate Christmas Trees and hang up evergreen branches. One England's customs is **nummering**. In the Middle Ages, people called mummers put on masks and acted out Christmas plays. These plays are still performed in towns and villages. The English gift giver is called **Father Christmas**. He wears a long red or green robe, and leaves presents in stockings on Christmas Eve. However, the gifts are not usually opened until the following afternoon.

Christmas in England began in AD 596, when St Augustine landed on her shores with monks who wanted to bring Christianity to the Anglo Saxons.



Father Christmas delivers them during the night before Christmas. The Children leave an empty stocking or pillowcase hanging at the end of the bed. In the morning they hope it will be full of presents.

In England the day after Christmas is called **Boxing Day** because boys used to go round collecting money in clay boxes. When the boxes were full, they broke them open.

In England Christmas dinner was usually eaten at Midday on December 25, during daylight.

In England, the only thing that people ate on the day before the feast was **Frumenty**, which is, was a kind of porridge made from corn. Over the years the recipe changed. Eggs, fruit, spice, lumps of meat and dried plums were added. The whole mixture was wrapped in a cloth and boiled. This is how plum pudding began.

In England the traditional Christmas dinner is roast turkey with vegetables and sauces. For dessert it is rich, fruity Christmas pudding with brandy sauce. Mince pies, pastry cases filled with a mixture of chopped dried fruit.

In England also they elect **Boy Bishops** in commemoration of St. Nicholas compassion for children. These mock bishops were allowed to do the duties of the ecclesiastic except deliver the Mass.

****Information from Suzanna Austin****

One point I would like to raise is on how Christmas is celebrated in England. As an English family living in rural England we have the pleasure of a traditional English Christmas with all the trimmings each year. You mention the Christmas trees and evergreen branches the Christmas trees are a tradition we adopted from Germany during Victoria's reign and the branches are mistletoe and holly for symbolic reasons. As Christmas is a religious festival many people here still attend midnight mass on Christmas eve and this is usually seen as the start of festivities. Again the reason presents are not opened until afternoon is that we wait until after morning service / morning mass. Your description of the gluttonous amounts consumed by the average person at Christmas dinner is very sparse, typically there are 2 roasted meats 1 being either goose (traditional) or turkey (american) covered in bacon and stuffed with sausagemeat, the other meat being a gammon. A variety of seasonal vegetables but essential are roast potatoes and brussel sprouts and always kilted sausages (also called sausages in blankets). For dessert Christmas pudding with brandy butter or brandy custard / cream, the pudding is so rich in alcohol that it is usually ignited before serving. Mince pies not only contain dried fruit but also suet and brandy. Christmas cake is also eaten and is traditionally made a couple of months (end of September) before Christmas and matured by regularly feeding it brandy. Incidentally boxing day derives its name from the practice of opening the alms boxes in church and distributing the money collected amongst the poor in the parish.



Christmas in Japan

Only 1 per cent of Japanese people believe in Christ. Even so, most Japanese people decorate their stores and homes with evergreens during Christmas.

They enjoy giving each other gifts, and this is the part they celebrate.

They have a Buddhist monk called **Hotei-oshō** who acts like Santa Claus. He brings presents to each house and leaves them for the children. Some think he has eyes in the back of his head, so children try to behave like he is nearby.

Among the Christian Japanese Christmas is not a day for the family. They do not have turkey or plum pudding, rather than that the day is spent doing nice things for others especially those who are sick in hospitals.

Christmas for those in Sunday schools is the happiest day of the year. On Christmas Eve or Christmas night, the children put on programs that last for hours, they sing, they recite and they put on a drama of the day Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Most children may not like Hotei-oshō so they may receive their presents from Santa who goes around with a red-nosed reindeer.

Christmas in China

The Christian children of China decorate trees with colorful ornaments. These ornaments are made from paper in the shapes of flowers, chains and lanterns. They also hang muslin stockings hoping that *Christmas Old Man* will fill them with gifts and treats.

The Chinese Christmas trees are called "**Trees of Light**." Santa Claus is called **Dun Che Lao Ren** which means "Christmas Old Man."

The non-Christian Chinese call this season the *Spring Festival* and celebrate with many festivities that include delicious meals and pay respects to their ancestors. The children are the main focus of these celebrations, they receive new clothes and toys, eat delectable food and watch firecrackers displays.