

JOLLY OLD ST. NICHOLAS

Traditional Christmas Song, ~1860's

The history of this simple, childlike Christmas carol isn't well-documented, but many historians believe that American composer, pastor, and school principal Benjamin Hanby wrote "*Jolly Old Saint Nicholas*" because it was published in the mid-1800s around the same time as Hanby's Christmas song "*Up on the Housetop*" and has similar musical qualities.

The song is traditionally performed to a melody originally written by James Lord Pierpont (which he used for the original version of "*Jingle Bells*"). The melody has also been attributed to this song that forms the basic notes of "*Jolly Old Saint Nicholas*" is "*Canon in D Major*" by Johann Pachelbel.

The traditional character known as 'Santa Claus' is also known to many as 'Jolly Old Saint Nicholas' who lives in the imaginations of children each Christmas season. The Santa Clause familiar with many of us today bears little resemblance to the original St Nicholas - a man who lived 1,700 years ago in Myra, a city in modern-day Turkey. Serving as a bishop in the early Christian church, his generosity was well-known. As one story goes, a man with three daughters fell on hard times. He didn't have enough money for a dowry for any of his daughters, so they couldn't marry. Legend has it that Nicholas secretly visited the family at night, dropping a bag of gold through the window.

~ Tull

