

# The origins of Santa Claus

*Saint Nicholas* was a wealthy Greek bishop in fourth-century Asia Minor – modern Turkey – who gave secret gifts of gold to the poor. Known in Dutch as *Sinterklaas*, a corruption of *Sint-Nicolaas*, he merged with the English *Father Christmas* character to create the modern *Santa Claus*

1939

**Rudolf, the Red-Nosed Reindeer** created for poem by **Robert L. May**. In 1949, May's brother-in-law **Johnny Marks** turns poem into song, made famous by **Gene Autry**



Donner

Comet

Prancer

Blitzen

Dasher

Cupid

Vixen

Dancer



Flying reindeer pull Santa's sleigh to help him deliver Christmas gifts



AD 280 - AD 343

**Nicholas of Myra** – later **Saint Nicholas** – revered as patron saint of children, sailors and ships

17th Century

Dutch immigrants bring stories of **Sinterklaas** (**Santa Claus**) to New Amsterdam, now New York

1823

NYC's **Troy Sentinel** newspaper publishes **Clement Clarke Moore** poem, *A Visit From St. Nicholas* (aka *The Night Before Christmas*), featuring old man on reindeer-drawn sleigh who brings gifts to children

1863-86

**Thomas Nast**, political cartoonist at **Harper's Weekly**, is first artist to define Santa's modern image, as bearded, plump, jolly man. His 1881 illustration attains status akin to official portrait

1931-64

Working with **Coca-Cola Company** and D'Arcy Advertising Agency, illustrator **Haddon Sundblom** is hired to create new vision of Santa Claus, which he bases on Moore poem's description of St. Nick