

A WELCOME VISITOR - Saint Nicholas, the Dutch  
Father Christmas, warmly welcomed to Amsterdam.

-Holland-

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Pictures.:- Here's a surprise ! This is Saint Nicholas, but we know him as Father Christmas !

Santa Claus is just a corruption of the name of Saint Nicholas, and actually this is the man who is responsible--

--for the custom of filling stockings - empty stockings - with presents.

As well as being the children's patron saint, he also--

--watches over Mariners, and the churches of Saint--

--Nicholas are usually built close to the sea, where sailors may easily attend to give thanks--

--for his protection of them. The festival of Saint Nicholas is held--

--on December 6th, but gradually through the years, (he died in three hundred and forty something) the customs--

--of this saint's day and Christmas Day have merged, so when we keep Christmas Day--

--we also honour Saint Nicholas. Now on shore, he is feted by the--

--enthusiastic people of Amsterdam, who press round his carriage.

The ceremony of re-creating the venerable saint is entered into with the greatest enthusiasm and sincerity. The populace follow him through the town--

--in their thousands, the devout singing sacred tunes as--

--he passes along the streets, others more exuberant, cheering him on his way. So when next you see Father Christmas on a cake or a Christmas tree, give a thought to the man who put him there - Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of little children and those who live by the sea.