

Donation of the Month

Christmas Stocking
Donor: Ruth Plum
TC-2634



“The stockings were hung by the chimney with care in the hopes that Saint Nicholas would soon be there” reads a line from *The Night Before Christmas*. But why do we hang oversize footwear from our mantles and wake up to them stuffed with small gifts, oranges and candy?

The origins of this tradition are unclear. Most traditions place its origins with the first mention of St. Nicholas who tossed three sacks or balls of gold down the chimney of a poor widowed man so his daughters could marry. Others place the tradition with a Scandinavian or Dutch tradition of leaving wooden shoes or stockings filled with carrots, straw or sugar for Odin or Sinterklass' horses. The children would be rewarded for their kindness with gifts and candy in their shoes or stockings. Stories from Italy, Hungary, Puerto Rico and other countries across the world are similar to those mentioned above; with each origin story helping to cement the modern tradition of hanging stockings on the mantle.

No matter who started the tradition it was brought to America by immigrants from across the European continent; and made more popular by the illustrator Thomas Nast and Clement Moore. Today stockings are still hung by the chimney in hopes of receiving gifts from Santa Claus, but these have evolved from actual footwear to fancy oversized items of décor or handmade family pieces.