



Notable Quotable

"In the depth of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."

~ Albert Camus,
French philosopher



December Horoscopes and Birthdays

In astrology, the Archers of Sagittarius are those born between December 1–21. These open-minded travelers are in constant motion, searching the globe for meaning. Curious, optimistic, and enthusiastic, they are not afraid of change and treasure freedom. Those born from December 22–31 are Capricorn's Goats. Goats are focused on lofty goals; these hardworking and determined souls will prevail with grit and resilience.

Walt Disney – December 5, 1901
Betty Grable – December 18, 1916
Howard Hughes – December 24, 1905
Clara Barton – December 25, 1821

Our December Birthday gems:

Donna Goodridge – December 8th
Clark Holbrook – December 9th
Mary Glen Peacock – December 22nd

Happy Birthday!

Waiting for the Sun continued from pg. 1

Halfway across the world in Iran, Persians also celebrate the return of the light. On *Shab-e Yalda*, people gather to light fires to protect each other from the evil of the night. They feast and read poetry as they await the sunrise. The return of the sun is equated with the banishment of evil, the arrival of goodness, and the triumph of Mithra, the Sun God, over dark forces.

Japan, too, celebrates the return of the sun. The winter solstice festival of

Toji-sai marks the start of a new year, and it is when farmers traditionally welcome the sun as the source of their bountiful crops. As in Iran, bonfires are lit during the night to encourage the sun's return. It is then common to take baths scented with the *yuzu* citrus fruit, which is believed to foster good health and fortune. On the solstice, don't despair during the long night; instead, think of all those around the world who, perhaps like you, await the return of the sun.

Holiday Movies

Lost for a good movie to see without cussing or violence? Take in some of these titles.

Babes in Toyland (1961)
Christmas in Connecticut (1945)
The Bishops Wife (1947)
Holiday Affair (1949)
A Christmas Carol (1938)
It Happened on 5th Avenue (1947)
The Great Rupert (1950)
Scrooge with Albert Finney (1970)
How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000)
Miracle on 34th Street (1955)
Home Alone (1990)

A Christmas Story (1983)
It's a Wonderful Life (1946)
The Santa Clause (1994)
The Polar Express (2004)
Holiday Inn Movie (1942)
White Christmas (1954)
...and many others!

Most movies can be found at the library on DVD or can be streamed for free on devices through Netflix or Google Movies, Amazon Prime. Did you know you can watch full length movies on YouTube on a computer or hook a laptop to your TV?

Whispering Willows

December 2018



The Willows of Easley ~ Assisted Living
105 Willow Place, Easley, SC 29640
www.thewillowsofeasley.com
864-855-9800

Celebrating December

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

Write a Friend Month

Hanukkah

December 2–10

Pretend to Be a Time Traveler Day

December 8

International Mountain Day

December 11

Crossword Puzzle Day

December 21

Christmas Day

December 25

Make Up Your Mind Day

December 31

Waiting for the Sun

In the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice, on December 21, brings the longest night of the year. Due to the tilt of Earth on its axis, the north pole faces away from the sun. While the interminable darkness stretches on, in many cultures this is a time to celebrate the light and has been for centuries. In fact, the celebration of winter solstice predates the Christmas holiday.

Perhaps the most famous destination for viewing the sun during the winter solstice is at Stonehenge in England. This famous arrangement of massive stones was erected in prehistoric times and is perfectly aligned with sunset on the winter solstice. Scientists have concluded that this was a site of

ancient ritual. Less famous is the massive burial mound and passageway at Newgrange in Ireland, dated to be older than the Pyramids. At sunrise on the winter solstice, the sun shines perfectly down the passageway to illuminate the innermost chamber. This is yet another instance where prehistoric peoples heralded the return of the sun and its light after the longest period of darkness.

continued on pg. 4



Christmas Crossing

It was nearly midnight on Christmas of 1776 when Revolutionary War General George Washington crossed the Delaware River to turn the tide of war in favor of the colonists. Washington had suffered numerous defeats, resulting in the loss of many strategic locations, including New York City in the north. Washington's latest plan included three crossings of the Delaware. He led a division of 2,400 men to surprise a group of German

Hessian soldiers gathered at Trenton. When Washington's force descended the next morning, the Hessians were caught unawares after a night of Christmas revels and were easily overwhelmed. When Washington's other two divisions of 3,000 men failed to make the rendezvous, he was forced to withdraw. While the victory was short-lived, Washington's renown and the morale of the Continental Army grew.

Go A-Wassailing



“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” was not meant to be a Christmas carol, but a tribute to inventor Johann Gutenberg.

Whether you have a good singing voice or not, get into the swing of the holiday season with Go Caroling Day on December 20. You may be surprised to hear that carols did not originate as holiday songs at all. Carols were folk dances, and *carol* meant “to dance in a ring.” Most often these dances and their accompanying songs were sung in the pubs (along with the presumptive overindulgence of ale). So when did carols make the jump from the alehouse to the church house? The answer might lie in Victorian England.

Wassailing, or the act of wishing good fortune on your neighbors, was a fairly common practice during the medieval era. It was believed that if you passed well wishes to your neighbors, they would reward you in turn. Caroling, or performing folk songs of well-wishes to neighbors, became traditional during local festivals and on holidays like May Day. But it was during the Victorian Era that

caroling became forever merged with Christmastime. Legend has it that the first Christmas carol service was held in Truro, England, in 1880, when Edward White Benson lured carolers out of the pub on Christmas Eve by publicizing a carol service at church.

It was also during Victorian England that Christmas became more commercialized. Publishers began compiling and printing vast anthologies of carols. Some went so far as to take ancient songs and rewrite them as hymns to the birth of Christ. Many of the most famous Christmas carols date from this period, including “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,” “The First Noel,” and “Joy to the World.” Nowadays, Christmas caroling is almost uniquely found during church services. Rarely do carolers venture door-to-door *a-wassailing* as they once did in olden times. But on December 20, Go Caroling Day, don’t be surprised to find a choir of voices outside your door.

Fun, odd Christmas facts

1. *Jingle Bells*, was written for Thanksgiving, not Christmas and was the first song to be broadcast from space.
2. In Germany, Poland, and the Ukraine, it is believed that to find a spider’s web on a Christmas tree is to bring good luck.
3. In Armenia, the traditional Christmas Eve meal is fried fish, lettuce and spinach. Japanese people traditionally eat KFC for Christmas dinner completed with a Boston Crème Pie for dessert.
4. The ‘X’ in “Xmas” does not take the “Christ” out of Christmas. In the greek alphabet, “X” or ‘chi’ is the first letter of the Greek word for Christ or Christos.
5. The first artificial Christmas Tree wasn’t a tree at all; it was created out of goose feathers dyed green.



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Holidays Happenings

Annual Christmas Family Party will be at 4:00pm for Assisted Living on Sunday, December 2nd, 2018. Come join the fun!!



New to this community! Christmas Light Tours. Beginning Monday, November 26th, we will be going out at night to view Christmas lights in different locales. We will be going to the Anderson City Village Light Tour, Easley/Pickens, Furman/Bob Jones University areas, Downtown Greenville and two “mystery” tours. Join the fun by signing up early!



Home for the Holidays

The sweet and spicy smell of gingerbread is a clear indicator that the holiday season is in full swing. By the time Gingerbread House Day arrives on December 12, you may have already indulged in eating this seasonal treat.



Nuremberg, Germany, is known as the “Gingerbread Capital of the World.”

Gingerbread, made with ginger root, is believed to have originated in East Asia, where ginger was originally cultivated. It is believed that ginger and gingerbread were introduced to Europe after the Crusades of the 11th century. Gingerbread was adopted most heartily in Germany, where monks perfected their heart-shaped *lebkuchen* cookies. These cookies were first made as unleavened honey cakes, made in the same fashion as communion wafers. With the introduction of ginger, German bakers transformed *lebkuchen* into their beloved gingerbread. It is a testament to gingerbread’s popularity that in 1487, Emperor Friedrich III presented all the children of the city of Nuremberg with gingerbread cookies shaped to his likeness.

The shape of gingerbread was not limited to hearts, faces, and people; miniature houses made of the cookie were also common. This is why a gingerbread house figured so prominently in the tale *Hansel and Gretel*, first published by German folklorists and brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in the 19th century. What better way for a witch to lure two children into her home than to build a home out of Germany’s favorite cookie? Through this tale, the Brothers Grimm spread the popularity of making gingerbread houses beyond Germany.

It may be surprising that one of the most enduring holiday traditions was popularized by the tale of a witch, but the religious significance of gingerbread has deeper roots than *Hansel and Gretel*. Perhaps it stems from the development of gingerbread by German monks. Or the use of gingerbread in religious ceremonies. Whatever the reason, warm, spicy gingerbread has become synonymous with the Christmas season.