

# Christmas Past

Take a trip down memory lane,  
one decade at a time!

BY KELSEY HURWITZ

I tend to get nostalgic around the holidays. I can't help thinking about my kids when they were little (they're all so grown up!) and my own Christmas mornings with my parents and siblings back in the day. Christmases past hold a special place in my heart: I wish I could still hit the mall to shop for gifts at The Limited, Wicks 'N' Sticks and Sam Goody, then grab an Orange Julius like I loved to do in the '80s! In that spirit, I thought it would be fun to take a look back at all the things that defined Christmas over the past five decades. I hope these pages bring you lots of joy—and maybe a few laughs too!

—Ree

Aluminum trees lit up living rooms in the 1960s.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES.

RIBBON CANDY: COURTESY OF EBAY.COM/US/R/60AM/CAD/MCON2. BROOCH: THE DITZY DIVA. ETSY.COM. SANTA MUG: CHARITY VINTAGE. ETSY.COM. WHITE CHRISTMAS, COCONUT SNOWMAN AND CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS: GETTY IMAGES. MATCHBOX CAR: EBAY.COM/US/R/HIGH/VALUES. JELLO DESSERT: COURTESY OF CLICK AMERICANA. GREETING CARD: THE HALLMARK ARCHIVES. HALLMARK CARDS, INC., KANSAS CITY, MO, USA.



First came the song recorded by Gene Autry (a.k.a. the Singing Cowboy), then came the book and TV special.



In 1959, Mattel cofounder Ruth Handler created Barbie for her daughter, Barbara, to act out her adult ambitions and dreams.



This candy was a favorite!

Women dressed up their holiday outfits with atomic starburst brooches.



# 1950s



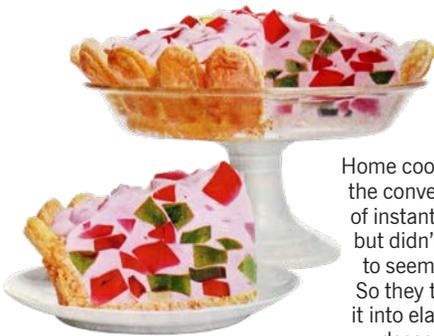
Pretty holiday cards became decorations.



Santa mugs became popular, making hot chocolate that much more fun.



White Christmas won over audiences in 1954 with its songs, dancing and the comedic chemistry of Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye.

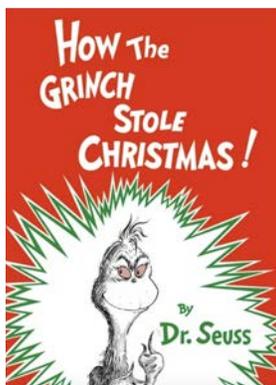


Home cooks liked the convenience of instant Jell-O but didn't want to seem lazy. So they turned it into elaborate desserts.



Coconut cake snowmen... where have they gone?

In 1957, the best villain since Scrooge arrived.



The Shiny Brite company produced the most in-demand ornaments of the decade, known for their bold colors.

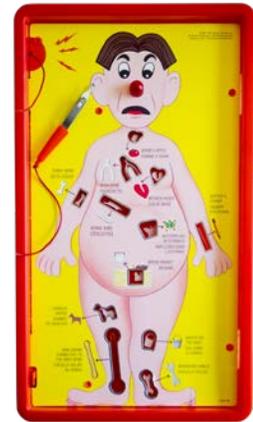


Inventor Jack Odell created Matchbox cars for his daughter in 1952 because her school only allowed toys that could fit inside a matchbox.



Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, a 1964 smash, had state-of-the-art animation. Each character was a four-inch puppet.

Hershey's Kisses debuted in festive red and green foil in 1962.



A University of Illinois student created a prototype of Operation in 1962. Kids couldn't wait to fix up Cavity Sam!



Electric candles were a popular decoration: Homeowners would put one in every window.

# 1960s



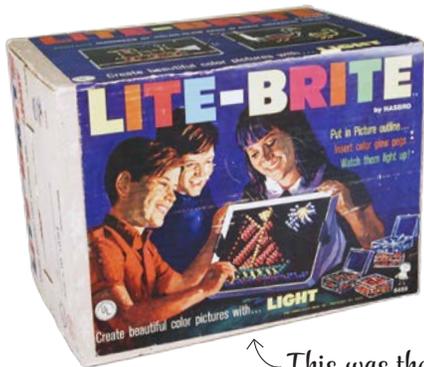
Little girls adored Tinkerbell cosmetics.



The 1964 Beach Boys album featuring the spirited single "Little Saint Nick" showed off the group's trademark harmonizing.



On December 9, 1965, almost half of America's households watched *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.



This was the "it" toy in 1967.



Every holiday party called for punch!

In 1963, playing house went next-level with the Easy-Bake Oven. The heat source was a light bulb.



Before *Elf on the Shelf*, there were Christmas pixies.



CHOCOLATE KISSES: THE HERSHEY COMPANY; OPERATION: A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS; EASY-BAKE OVEN AND RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER: ALAMY; TINKERBELL COSMETIC: VERASCLASSICVINTAGE. ETSY.COM; PIXIE: EBAY.COM/TR/THETOPDOG/FISH; PUNCH BOWL: THE STRONG NATIONAL MUSEUM OF PLAY, ROCHESTER, NY; SAFE-T-GLO CANDLE: COUNTRY GIRLS VINTAGE/ETSY.



Everyone and their grandmother had these ceramic trees on display!



This was a hit album in December 1970.

Avon made these special holiday cologne bottles. They're still popular with collectors.



Strawberry Shortcake arrived, smelling extra sweet. Soon she was everywhere: on lunch boxes, clothes, bedding and more.

# 1970s



The beloved marshmallowy dish known as ambrosia salad was a must at holiday meals!



The Carpenters at Christmas aired in 1977. The duo's "Home for the Holidays" has become a classic.



The Department 56 company released a Christmas village in 1976 that evolved into a holiday staple. It was inspired by charming Stillwater, MN.



Polaroid cameras were a popular party trick—the selfies of yesteryear!



Mood rings made a great gift. Blue meant calm.



Melted plastic popcorn decor was all the rage!



Despite its \$25 price (about \$110 today), Simon was a hit in 1978 and launched an electronic-games boom.



Kids hoped to find roller skates under the tree.

AVON BOTTLE: PRIZEFINDS.ETSY.COM; STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE: EBAY.COM/US/R/210\_TOYS; SIMON: ALAMY; THE CARPENTERS, POLAROID CAMERA, ROLLER SKATES AND CERAMIC TREE: GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTMAS VILLAGE: DEPARTMENT 56; POPCORN CANDY CANES: EBAY.COM/STR/BESTOYS1; MOOD RING AND AMBROSIA: SHUTTERSTOCK.



Parents stood in line for hours in 1983 to snag a Cabbage Patch Kid. Every doll had a birth certificate.

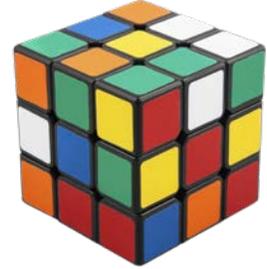


*A Christmas Story* wasn't a big deal when it came out in 1983. It caught on five years later when TNT aired the movie continuously for 24 hours.



Teens lived to play Tetris on Game Boys.

The namesake cube of architect Erno Rubik hits stores in 1980; solving it was the ultimate nerd achievement!



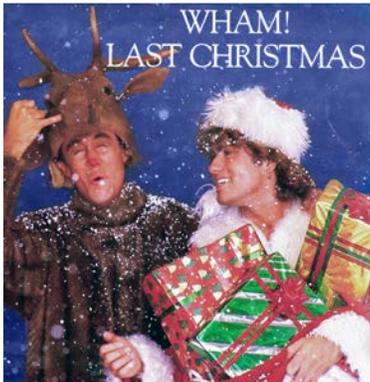
This was a totally rad stocking stuffer.



# 1980s



The blingier the earrings, the merrier!



George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley's 1984 single was quintessentially '80s with its new wave electropop vibe.



When two gamers got frustrated about lost Scrabble tiles, they created Trivial Pursuit in 1981. It became one of the most played board games ever.



Ugly sweaters took off, thanks in part to Chevy Chase's character in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.



Swatches were on everyone's wish list.

Tree decorations were over the top: baubles, tinsel, garland, the works!

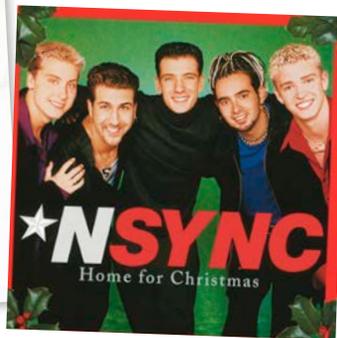


Care Bears out-cuted teddy bears!





Macaulay Culkin was the face of 1990's *Home Alone*.



These were the holiday albums of the decade. Critics declared Mariah Carey's an "instant classic," while \*NSYNC's thrilled boy-band fans.



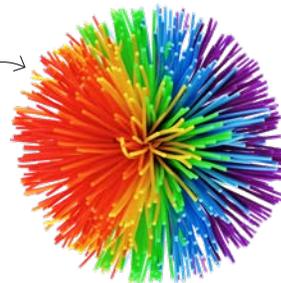
The *Sex and the City* gals turned the cosmopolitan into the party cocktail of choice.

# 1990s



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles ruled!

Kids and adults got Koosh balls as gifts.



American Girl dolls were huge. WWII-era Molly McIntire is one of the original three historical dolls.

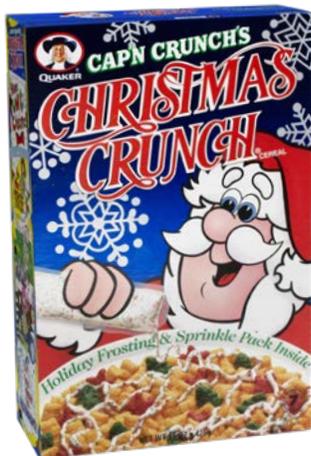


Families flocked to theaters to see Tim Allen at his snarky best in 1994's *The Santa Clause*. (Bill Murray reportedly turned down the role.)



Single-color trees took off as themed sets by designers like Christopher Radko hit the market.

Christmas breakfast in 1995 was extra sweet!



In the early '90s, CDs overtook cassette tapes, and everyone wanted a Sony Discman.



People gave the gift of VHS tape rentals.

The question wasn't whether you wanted a Beanie Baby, it was which one could you get your hands on.

COSMOPOLITAN, KOOSH BALL AND CHRISTMAS TREE: GETTY IMAGES; BLOCKBUSTER MEMBERSHIP CARD: SHUTTERSTOCK; BEANIE BABY, THE STRONG NATIONAL MUSEUM OF PLAY, ROCHESTER, NY; DISCMAN, THE SANTA CLAUSE AND HOME ALONE: ALAMY; CAP'N CRUNCH: THE QUAKER OATS COMPANY; AMERICAN GIRL DOLL: EBAY.COM/USR/TOYSRUSPLUS; NINJA TURTLE STOCKING: EBAY.COM/USR/AMCNEECE\_4.