New Year's greetings

Greeting cards were not new. Since Aloys Senefelder perfect lithography in 1796, merchants would send their customers best wishes for the new year. (Lithography is the technique by which large numbers of drawings or texts first drawn on a finely-textured stone could be reproduced on paper.) Christmas cards gradually replaced New Year's card, except in France, where there was a preference to the latter.

Father Christmas on Christmas cards

The first greeting card produced in the US was by German lithographer, Louis Prang, who emigrated to New York around 1850. Prang set up a workshop in Boston, Massachusetts in 1860 and began to produce the first color cards with scenes of winter tales for Christmas and New Year.

During the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln requested a political cartoonist, Thomas Nast, to illustrate Santa Christmas (Santa Claus) with the Union troops to bolster their spirits. Nast was the first to introduce a Father Christmas in the now-traditional red suit and big leather belt.

Today, greeting cards is a multi-billion dollar industry supplying cards for just about any occasion.