Christmas official, but not generally observed

In 325AD, Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman emperor, introduced Christmas as an immovable feast on 25 December. He also introduced Sunday as a holy day in a new 7-day week, and introduced movable feasts (Easter). In 354AD, Bishop Liberius of Rome officially ordered his members to celebrate the birth of Jesus on 25 December.

However, even though Constantine officiated 25 December as the birthday of Christ, Christians, recognizing the date as a pagan festival, did not share in the emperor's good intentions. **Christmas failed to gain universal recognition among Christians until quite recently**.

In England, for instance, Oliver Cromwell banned Christmas festivities between 1649 and 1660 through the so-called Blue Laws, believing that Christmas should be a solemn day.

When many Protestants escaped persecution by fleeing to the colonies all over the world, interest in joyous Christmas celebrations was rekindled there. Still, Christmas was not even a legal holiday until the 1800s. And, keep in mind, there was no Father Christmas (Santa Claus) figure at that time.

Christmas becomes popular

The popularity of Christmas was spurred on in 1820 by Washington Irving's book *The Keeping of Christmas at Bracebridge Hall*.

In 1834, Britain's Queen Victoria brought her German husband, Prince Albert, into Windsor Castle, introducing the tradition of the Christmas tree and carols that were held in Europe to the British Empire.