

CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

[1779 – 1863]



Clement Clarke Moore was born on June 15th, 1779 in New York City. He came from a wealthy, well-connected family. His father, Benjamin Moore, was the Bishop of New York; famous for officiating when George Washington became the first ever President of the United States.

In 1813, Clement married Catherine Elizabeth Taylor and together they settled at Chelsea, in what was then a country estate outside New York City. It was here that they would raise their children and it was here that he would write *'Twas the night before Christmas*.

Today it remains the tradition for many American families to read this poem on Christmas Eve, but if it had been left to Clement himself, this would never have been the case!

He had only written the poem as a Christmas gift for his children and never meant for others to read it. However, a family friend, Miss H. Butler, disagreed and secretly sent a copy to a New York newspaper who published it in 1823, the condition being that the author was to remain anonymous. Other newspapers picked it up, then magazines and anthologies, but still no one knew who had written such a classic! Within a few years, nearly every child in America knew the still-anonymous poem by heart, and Moore's vision of Santa, riding on a sleigh pulled by reindeer was part of everyone's Christmas.

It wasn't until 1838 that Moore admitted having written the poem and in 1844 included it within an anthology of his work. Why did he hold back and forfeit years of author royalties?

As a serious scholar, he feared writing a popular children's poem might set him up for ridicule in the cutthroat academic world and damage his reputation. This proved not to be the case. He is buried at the Trinity Church Cemetery in uptown New York.

Only four hand-written copies of this classic poem are known to exist. Three are in museums. The fourth copy (signed by Clement himself and sent to a friend as a gift in 1860) was sold in December 2006 for the sum of \$280,000.

Clement Clarke Moore was American.

True

False

He was born in springtime.

True

False

His father was Bishop of New York when George Washington became President.

True

False

A family friend sent his poem to a newspaper, without his consent.

True

False

His famous poem was first published anonymously in 1822.

True

False

He never wanted people to know that it was he who had written the poem.

True

False

Only three original copies of this poem are known to exist.

True

False

A signed copy of this poem was sold for over \$250,000 in 2006.

True

False