



The USPS 2022 Christmas issue featured four elves preparing treats and toys for holiday gift giving. Four related pictorial postmarks were also used by the post office during the Christmas season.



Elves appeared as early as 1933 on Christmas seals.



One of the earliest references to the connection between Christmas and elves occurs in the 1812 fairy tale *The Elves and the Shoemaker* by the Brothers Grimm. A shoemaker who had not been able to meet the demand for new shoes is helped by several elves just before Christmas who finish all the shoes for him. Grenada and the Grenadines illustrated this story on a series of stamps in 1985.



Elves did not become part of our Christmas tradition until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Christmas elf first appeared in American literature in 1850 when Louisa May Alcott wrote, but never published, a book titled *Christmas Elves*.



The origin of the elf is thought to have been derived from Norse mythology, which referred to them as the hidden folk, or huldufolk. The elf modern day Christmas elf is most likely a combination of this Norse legend with other Scandinavian and Celtic cultures and myths regarding elves, fairies and nature spirits.

## The Christmas Elf

Carol Costa

On December 26, 1857, *Harper's Weekly* published the poem, "*The Wonders of Santa Claus*," that described elves helping Santa create all the gifts he delivers to good children during the holidays.



The Christmas elf as we know him is a little creature dressed in red or green, with large pointed ears, and wearing a pointed hat. Elves are usually depicted making toys in Santa's workshop or caring for his reindeer.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Godey's Lady's Book* was influential in the establishment of Christmas traditions. On its 1873 Christmas issue, this popular lady's magazine featured an illustration titled *The Workshop of Santa Claus* showing Santa surrounded by elves and toys.



On December 2, 1922, the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* featured a Norman Rockwell illustration of Santa surrounded by his elves. In 2004, St. Vincent and the Grenadines used the image on a postage stamp.

