

ABC NEWSLETTER

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1999-2000 ABC Calendar

- May 13 ABC Annual Meeting. Home of President and Mrs. Norman Stevens, Storrs, CT
- Sept. 8 ABC Members' new acquisitions. Home of Susan Aller, West Hartford, CT.
- Oct. 22-23 Tomi dePaola Conference and Art Show, William Benton Museum, University of CT, Storrs, CT.
- Nov. 3-24 "The Original Art," Children's book illustration exhibit, curated by Dilys Evans, Society of Illustrators, New York City.
- Nov. 13-14 Connecticut Children's Book Fair, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT.
- Dec. New York trip.

American Holidays in Nineteenth Century Juvenile Literature

G.E. Wait

“A” is for Apple, that hangs on the tree,
“B” is for Bells that chime out in glee.

“G” is for Gifts, that bring us delight,
“H” is for Holly with red berries bright.

“K” is Kris Kringle with fur cap and coat;
“L” is for letters the children all wrote.

“O” is for Oranges, yellow and sweet.
“P” is Plum pudding, a holiday treat.

“T” is for Turkey, so tender and brown.
“S” is for Snow that falls silently down.

“W” for Wreaths hung up on the wall.
“X” is for Christmas, with pleasure for all!¹

Everyone loves a holiday—especially children and the young at heart. Holidays are the magic days when, save in times of deepest tragedy, the cares of life are put aside to celebrate those periodic milestones by which we punctuate the year. They are the times when memories and dreams meet, and once again “visions of sugarplums,” of May-baskets, of skating and sledding, of turkeys and mince pies, of firecrackers or valentines “dance in our heads.” So, let us become children once

again—not, this time, of our own childhood, but of our nation’s—as we journey back through a century—and a year—enjoying, through the medium of our own literature

The holidays our forebears knew
When they, like us, were children, too.

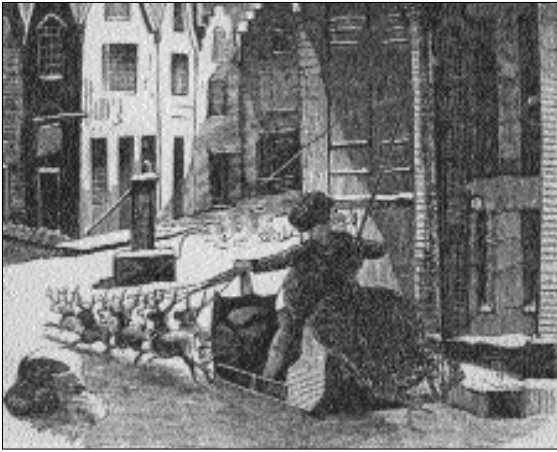
* * * *

[What] ho! New Year!
Are you so soon here?
You have come on the wings of the morning,
No noise or display
Has prepared your way,
You are here without a word’s warning.

But in your face
I plainly trace
A happy and kind disposition;
So welcome here,
New friend, but dear—
We receive you without a suspicion.

Then let us start
With a merry heart
To make the tour of the seasons,
And never fall out
Through the whole long route,
Unless for the best of reasons!²

What fun! to launch the year on its journey, like a boy on his sled,³ full of adventure and expectation. But it wasn’t all fun and adventure, as the moralists never tired of reminding their youthful readers. There were duties to be attended to—like regular Sabbath observance, for example; and according to *The Child’s Magazine*



(Jan. 1828), there was no better time to begin than on the first Sabbath of the year. Not to be outdone by piety by the Methodists, the Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union's *The Children's Magazine* introduced its 1851 volume with a calendar of the Church holy days in January, and continued the practice monthly throughout the year, ignoring the secular holidays altogether.

And throughout the century, editors of the religious juvenile press, in wishing their readers a Happy New Year, also stressed the importance of beginning the year on a moral note. According to *The Child's Paper* (Jan. 1856, p.1), published by the American Tract Society, children should take the occasion of the changing year to be thankful: for a beautiful world, for life's necessities, for homes and parents, for schools—and for Sunday Schools, of course—and for the assurance that “when you leave this world, there is room for you in Heaven . . . A ‘Happy New Year,’ then, to the children!”

Not surprisingly, then, the first of the holidays on the Nineteenth Century calendar was a serious one: the Second of February. But Twentieth-Century tradition notwithstanding, the occasion celebrated, at least in the homes of the pious, was not Groundhog Day, but Candlemas, as Peter Parley reminded his readers in 1836.⁴ Little observed now-a-days, Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran children during the early days of the republic lit candles in honour of the Virgin Mary; and in Protestant homes the faithful might observe the day, if it was noticed at all, as the occasion when the Christchild was presented in the Jerusalem temple.

But the day had a secular significance, as well, which in New England foreshadowed the transformation of the second of February into “Groundhog Day”—for according to Peter Parley, “Farmers have a maxim which they often repeat on Candlemas day: ‘Half your wood, and half your hay, Candlemas Day.’ By [this] they mean that though the winter months are more than half gone, they shall still need

half their stores for themselves and their animals.”

But if February can be, at least in New England, the grimmest month of the twelve, its temperamental weather is not without relief—for from Candlemas to Saint Valentine’s Day is less than a fortnight. Alas, on that day, for the tongue-tied who know not how fitly to declare their sentiments to the object of their affections, on that day, when according to Peter Parley, “the birds choose their mates [and] the young their Valentines—that is, their particular friends for the year.” But if you are shy, or if the words do not come tripping lightly from your tongue, do not despair; for enterprising publishers like C.P. Huestis had, by mid-century, assembled in such volumes as the *Beau’s Valentine Writer* (New York: 1850), a collection of sentiments deemed appropriate for winning the love—or at least the attention—of the object of one’s affections; for young males, then as now, seemed often less adept than their female counterparts at formulating the expression of their deepest emotions:

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To thy beauty, I my duty,
Here in humble homage pay,
But the curse is, that my verses,
Can’t reveal the half I’d say.
Must I languish long in anguish,
Ere my arms around thee twine?
With fond pleasure, clasp my treasure,
Take thee for my Valentine?

Or this:

Like the sweetly budding rose,
Freshened by the gentle rain;
Like the evening star that glows,
Brightest of the starry train;
Like a well arranged bouquet,
Where the fairest flowers combine,
Odours rich and colours gay,
s my own sweet Valentine.

No such inhibitions hampered Hartford's poet-educator Lydia Sigourney in 1848, as she availed herself of the occasion to express her affectionate regard for her former student, Elizabeth Cogswell, now the wife of Congressman James Dixon. In a valentine constructed of materials commercially marketed for the purpose, Mrs. Sigourney invites Elizabeth Dixon to raise the flap on the front of the valentine to "Look at my beloved"—beneath which (flap) the sender has mounted a small piece of mirror-glass in which the recipient sees her own face reflected.⁵ What could be more charmingly Victorian?

Judging from what the children's literature of the last century reveals, however, it would appear that it is not until after the Civil War that St. Valentine's Day takes on the full-blown romantic overtones and the general appeal to small children that have come to characterize its Twentieth Century observance. Perhaps nowhere is this transition so well illustrated as in Lizzie B. Humphrey's charming illustration, designed to accompany a poem by Nellie Garabrant published in the February 1874 issue of *Oliver Optic's Magazine* (p. 96):

I remember my first valentine,
The cause of childish joy,
For I was then a tiny girl,
The sender but a boy.
It was indeed a gorgeous thing,
In brilliant colors wrought, —
Above a bleeding, broken heart
Fat Cupids fiercely fought.

The next love-message I received
When I was sweet sixteen;
A pretty trifle, gilt and lace,
With tissue blue between;
Two pink hearts on an arrow fixed,
Surrounded by a wreath;
An altar, church, white doves and rings,
Hymeneal lines beneath.

Slide 3

The third, ah, friends! it was the last,
The dearest and the best;
It told a tale of honest love,
It brought me joy and rest.
A cream-white shield of satin bore
A moss rose wet with dew;
The name I loved was written on
A tiny scroll of blue.

The sender—well, I married him,
One bright St. Valentine:
He spoke the words that made his name,
Home, goods, and chattels mine.
I said 'twas the last valentine;
But that I now recall,
For I have still another one,
The sweetest of them all ...

“What shall we name him?” papa says;
“Now tell me, wifie mine.”
I smiling turn, and laughing say,
“We’ll call him ‘Valentine’.”

Likewise, in the wake of the Civil War, spring’s patriotic holidays begin to come to the fore. “Presidents’ Day” is, of course, a very recent innovation—born, I suspect, of the reluctance to give the laboring classes two paid holidays, and the children two vacation days, in February. Despite the reverence paid him as our martyred president, the birthday of Abraham Lincoln was never a southern, nor a national holiday, notwithstanding its regular observance in many states of the North and West. The birthday of Washington, however, was generally observed by adults in the Nineteenth Century as an important milestone in the nation’s history, and children’s schoolbooks regularly celebrated the virtues (real and supposed) of

the Father of the Country. In 1869 the editor of *Oliver Optic's Magazine* commissioned the rising illustrator Thomas Nast to design a full-page woodcut in commemoration of the birthday of our first president, noting in the accompanying article: "The birthday of the Father of Our Country . . . has become a national holiday; and as the years roll on . . . the day will be hallowed and commemorated with as much earnestness as the Fourth of July." And here, as so often in the last century, the moral note is struck, as the editor sermonizes: "We hope our readers . . . will learn the instructive moral lesson which the life of Washington teaches, and endeavor to imitate his illustrious example."⁶

Parenthetically, before we move on from the sublime to the utterly ridiculous, let me interject here a note about the expression on the face of Washington in the Nast illustration. Based, probably, on one of the commonly reproduced portraits by Gilbert Stuart, Nast has, it seems to me, introduced a somewhat sinister note into the statesman's expression, to which we will recur when we consider his now famous illustrations of Clement C. Moore's "The Night Before Christmas." But now, late in February, a visit from St. Nicholas is but a fading memory, or a very distant hope, indeed, for:

April has come
With its sunshine and showers,
Which, says the old addage,
Bring forth the May flowers.

Now this is the day
For young rogues at school
To make of each other
'A great April fool'.

Some are walking about
With rags pinned to their gown,
While others are sent
On the 'fool's errand' round.



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And some 'till their sides ache
Are laughing at jokes
Or listening to stories
That prove all a hoax.

In short, I believe
I could scarcely find paper
Were I to attempt
To describe every caper.

Now then I'll stop writing,
And see, as I leave,
That no ugly figure
Is pinned to my sleeve! (abbr.)

So wrote "Augusta" in the April 1836 issue of *Parley's Magazine* (p.116). Small wonder that Washington who, as a child, according to Parson Weems, could not tell a lie, has a sour expression of disapproval on his noble face!

For then, as now, pranks could be carried too far and end in tragedy, as J. L. Blake warned the readers of *The Boys' and Girls' Annual* in 1845.⁷ In a story entitled simply "April-Fool Day," a group of schoolboys propose to give themselves a week's vacation by dispatching a false letter from a distant town stating that their teacher's mother is at the door of death. Two or three of the "good boys" oppose the scheme on various moral grounds; but the letter is sent, and on receiving it, their teacher starts north—only to be drowned while attempting to cross an icy river.

If, by this point, it is beginning to seem that there is a distinct tension between "fun" and "responsibility" in the literary treatment of holidays during the Nineteenth Century—at least in the literature aimed at children—the impression is undoubtedly correct. For if holidays were meant to be enjoyed, few writers for children neglected the opportunity to draw from the holiday observance a moral lesson for the elevation of their youthful readers.

Take something as frivolous as May Day, for example; when children in temperate climates danced about maypoles and gathered flowers to celebrate the onset of spring. “Of all the festivities which appear to be of Saxon origin,” Peter Parley informed his little readers in 1845, “May-day is one of the most pure, pleasing, and sentimental.” It was a time for picnics and excursions—and often for the choice of a “Queen of the May.”

Among the queens of all the earth,
Who reign their little day,
The veriest queen of all, in worth,
Is the bonny Queen of May.

O, long may reign this little queen,
Long live her subjects leal,
Afresh to twine love’s chaplets green,
That her untold years conceal.⁸

Endless were the verses composed in her honour! In 1845, for example, *Parley’s Magazine* published an ode to the May Queen by a young English poet named Tennyson, which had just been set to music by the

Scottish-American composer William Dempster. And by late in the century, as American society began to reflect the shift from rural to urban, the readers of *Our Boys and Girls* were offered an illustration of a May Day celebration in the heart of the city where, if flowers were in short supply, nevertheless a “queen” could still be crowned, and her court could still dance about a makeshift maypole.⁹

But here, again, the note of caution is sounded by moralists. In a story included in *The Pearl* (1839),¹⁰ one of the numerous holiday gift-anthologies published in mid-century America, Virginia, a girl of 13, is faced with a dilemma when invited to a May Day party. All her well-to-do friends will have new frocks for the occasion. But Virginia’s family is one of modest means; and her mother has to explain to her that they cannot afford the new dress she wants for the party. If she wants to

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attend the party, she must go in her tasteful, if unfashionable dress and not mind the “satirical” and insensitive remarks of her more affluent—and obviously spoiled—friends. When it comes time to elect the “Queen of the May,” despite receiving several votes, including that of the boy named “king,” it is not Virginia, but another more fashionably clad girl who is elected. “The little monarchs were now crowned with wreathes of oak and myrtle and conducted to their ‘high places’ at the head of the room”. But all turns out well for Virginia who, in the course of the festivities, had courageously saved an infant from under the hooves of a runaway horse. In tribute to her courage and true beauty of soul, the May Queen presents her crown to Virginia—thus rewarding true and simple virtue, and, incidentally, shaming the girls who had ridiculed Virginia for her unfashionable attire.

The other May holiday, first celebrated in 1868—Memorial Day, or “Decoration Day” as it was first known—was the day set aside for commemorating the sacrifice of the soldiers and sailors who had died in the Civil War, and for decorating their graves. It was thus a solemn occasion, and it appears to have been little noticed in the children’s literature of the last century. In 1869, the second year of its observance in the North, however, *Our Boys and Girls* did publish the text of a “Decoration Hymn” by Samuel Burnham, which had been included in *Sabbath Songs for Children’s Worship* earlier that year:

O God of our fathers! O God of our nation!
Their faith was unwavering, their trust was in Thee;
Thou gav’st them the victory, to our land gave salvation,
And smiled once again on the home of the free.

One suspects, however, that with its allusion to victory, this hymn was not a great favorite in the South.

But throughout the nation (however differently it might be viewed in different regions) the Fourth of July—or “Independent Day” as it was sometimes called—was a festive occasion for young and old alike. Even the sometimes stuffy religious periodicals—like the July 1856 number of *The Child’s Paper* (p. 28), issued by the American Tract Society—let themselves be carried away with enthusiasm:

It is the nation's birthday! . . . The ringing of bells, the firing of cannon and crackers, orations, Sabbath-school gatherings, sailing on rivers, or walks in the woods . . . everybody is very glad to be one of our great and happy nation. . .

But presently the sober note is sounded; and the article ends with a little moral lesson about the faults that can destroy a child or a nation: Sabbath-breaking, swearing, drunkenness, dishonesty, oppression, and pride. And children are reminded that they

. . . will soon take the places of their parents . . . Your character must help mold the character of the nation . . . And what is your part? To think right and to act right yourself.

And even Peter Parley strikes the moral note, with a children's hymn by Mason & Webb for "Independent Day" 1835.

With joy we meet,
With smiles we greet
Our schoolmates bright and gay . . .
O who from home
Would fail to come
On Independent Day.

While thunder breaks,
And music wakes
Its patriotic lay,
At temple-gate
Our feet shall wait,
On Independent Day.

For liberty,
Great God, to thee

Our grateful thanks we pay;
For thanks, we know,
To thee we owe
On Independent Day.¹¹ [abbr.]

The following year the old storyteller describes with approbation an “alternative” observation of the day by the Sunday-school of Horace Bushnell’s North Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut. There children, teachers and parents assembled in a hall decorated with greens and blossoms, where a hymn was sung and each student was personally greeted by the minister. After refreshments and another hymn, the children are “treated” to a discourse by Thomas H. Gallaudet on the meaning of the day, in which he draws an analogy between national freedom and freedom from sin—and nothing is said at all about the picnics and bells and fireworks these good children are probably missing.¹²

Oh well—there’s always Thanksgiving and Christmas to look forward to. But wait! What about Labor Day and Halloween? While Labor Day was first observed as a national holiday near the end of the century in 1896, it is not until well into the Twentieth Century, when the automobile made three-day weekends an opportunity for travel, that the day took on much significance for children; and there is little, if any, evidence of its celebration in the juvenile literature of that day as a tribute to the laboring classes.

As for Halloween, that holy-day which Twentieth Century entrepreneurs have transformed into an orgy of juvenile greed, if it was observed at all in Nineteenth Century America, it was chiefly done in the liturgical churches where the faithful commemorated and prayed for the souls of the departed. Noticed briefly in *Robert Merry’s Museum* in September 1844 (p. 66–68), Halloween was characterized as a holiday of the highland Scots, at which games like ducking for apples and “snap-dragon” were played, and where one’s guests might be served a “Halloween-cake” in which were embedded a number of symbolic tokens: a ring for marriage, a sixpence for wealth, a silver thimble for the “old-maid”—a custom which in England, and in American cities with a large Anglican population came to be associated with the Thanksgiving or Christmas pudding.

Then Madge came in with her mam
moth plum pudding;
And oh! what a pudding was there!
The rich luscious plums from the sides
all protruding,
So temptingly fragrant and fair!

—this, as *Merry's Museum and Woodworth's Cabinet* details in November 1858 (p. 142–3), to be eaten after roast turkeys and ducks, and mince and apple pies, and all the savory viands under which the Thanksgiving table groaned had been consumed! Thanksgiving: that most American of all the year's festivals, more faithfully observed in New England than Christmas itself.

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Thanksgiving is coming, that day of all days,
When children are merry and full of new plays;
When uncles and aunts and all the dear cousins
Meet at the homestead, almost by dozens.

And grandpa, dear grandpa, the best of old men,
Forgets on that day, that he's three-score and ten . . .

And grandma, good grandma, how busy is she
To dine at her table this big family;
There are turkeys and geese, and puddings and pies,
Enough, I would think, for a whole year's supplies.

The sweet sense of kindness steals soft o'er the breast,
As parted ones come to the old home for rest . . .

Sweet rest in the old home, fathers and mothers,
Parents and children, and sisters and brothers.

'Tis Thanksgiving without, Thanksgiving within;
Unthankfulness now would indeed be a sin:
The Giver of Good let us heartily praise
For all the home joys of our Thanksgiving days.
— “K”

But if “K” could thus celebrate the joys of the day in *The Child's Paper* (Nov. 1858, p. 44), the American Tract Society's paper of the preceding year had made sure that its little readers had a “correct” understanding of the day's true significance, in a story entitled “Four Thanksgivings before Breakfast.”

In this story, Mary, a little girl from Boston, goes to spend Thanksgiving with her grandparents in the country. Early on Thanksgiving morning, Mary accompanies her cousin as he delivers four large pies—gifts from their grandmother—to four poor households, and thereby learns the true meaning of Thanksgiving in the words of one of the recipients:

‘Your folks are always thinking of poor folks. The Good Book says: “He that honoreth his Maker hath mercy on the poor . . .”’

[To which our little heroine replies]: ‘Oh! I wish I had a cartload of Thanksgiving [treats] to leave . . . how glad they are!’

Four Thanksgivings before breakfast! [the author of the story editorializes]. That is better than most people have. Indeed, I am afraid there are some who have not one, even in their hearts.¹³

And so comes Christmas, which, if virtually ignored in many still-puritan rural New England households until well into the Nineteenth Century, had nonetheless taken root in the hearts of New England's urban population, and in the Dutch and Anglican and German communities of the Atlantic seaboard and the Midwest. From thence, over the course of the century, it had communicated its special magic throughout the land.

Glad Christmas comes, and every hearth
Makes room to give him welcome now;
E'en want will dry its tears in mirth,
And crown him with a holly bough.¹⁴

But the New England establishment welcomed Christmas cautiously, as witness this commentary in the December 1845 issue of *Robert Merry's Museum* (p. 353–4):

... Sour must be the bosom that does not feel the kindly influence of this holiday . . . Christmas is the anniversary of Christ's birthday . . .

In olden time, the day was noticed by voluptuous eating and deep drinking; and Christmas was then personified by a fat, lusty old guzzler rising out of a punch-bowl, as is represented in the engraving above. This was a great abuse of this happy fete-day, and it shows how coarse and brutal man may become, even in noticing a religious festivity.

... But, as the world improves, these evils are mitigated, and Christmas is now generally noticed in a proper manner.

"As the world improves . . ." Once again we encounter the tension, alluded to by "Robert Merry," between the self-indulgent and the holy.

Once in Royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for his bed.
Mary was that mother mild;
Jesus Christ her little child.

And through all his wondrous childhood,
He would honor and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms he lay;

Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as he.

So wrote Cecil Frances Humphreys (later, Cecil Frances Alexander) for the Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union's juvenile monthly in December of 1848. Parenthetically, it should be noted here that while it is commonly asserted that this lovely children's hymn, now widely sung to the tune "Irby," did not appear in America until 1865 when it was included in *Cantica Sacra* (Boston), edited by J. H. Cornell, it was, in fact, written for and published in the *Children's Magazine* nearly two decades earlier.¹⁵ And it was meant to remind the magazine's readers that in addition to being a happy season, Christmastide was also a holy time.

And it was also a time of miracles—when good things, apparently impossible at any other time of year, seemed to happen then as naturally as dawn and dusk. In *The Magic Mirror*, for example, a mid-century story by Theodosia Ford, perhaps suggested by Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, a man grown cynical and long-estranged from his family, upon gazing into a mirror on Christmas Eve, sees a disturbing reflection of himself and of his own loneliness that prompts a reconciliation and reunion with his parents at the family homestead on Christmas Day.¹⁶

But far more touching is an 1865 story by the pseudonymous "Cousin Carrie," entitled *Keep a Good Heart*, a tale which typifies a spate of children's moral novels and novelettes set in the Christmas season. Here two very clear moral lessons are offered to the young reader:

1. Have faith, and don't give 'way to discouragement.
2. Being kind to others is a virtue central to the true meaning of Christmas—and, if practiced, will eventually return to reward the generous.

The story narrates two successive Christmasses and the year between them in the lives of two sisters, Lillian and Eve, orphans who have made their way alone in New York City. At first all goes well; and despite their poverty, Lillian's sewing is able to provide the girls a simple living, and even a few treats on Christmas Eve. But in the ensuing year, Lillian loses her job, falls ill, and is no longer able to support their meagre establishment. It's at this point that Eve, with the help of an

Afro-American peddler woman and a blind Italian organ-grinder, takes over—and through a virtually incredible set of circumstances, they come to the attention of a prosperous merchant on Christmas Eve. A genuine, if somewhat parochial philanthropist, Mr. Gray moves the two girls into his own home, where they enjoy the family's Christmas celebration. Lillian is given the nursing she needs for complete recovery, and the fruit-peddler and organ-grinder are suitably provided for.¹⁷

A similar story, based on a German tale of the 1840's, tells how a forester and his family, threatened with dismissal and eviction from their home through political intrigue, are saved from disaster by the intervention on Christmas Eve of an orphan, now grown to manhood, whom they had taken into their home one Christmas Eve many years before.¹⁸

Indeed, generosity and benevolence are themes which run throughout Nineteenth Century literary portrayals of Christmas addressed to children in the secular, as well as the religious press. *Merry's Museum and Parley's Magazine* of January 1857, for example, prints a story by May Fullerton (p. 13–15) in which two boys are presented each with a silver dollar on Christmas morning, which they may spend as they like (the shops in those days being open on Christmas day). Under the tree, however, is a package without a name. It is to be given at the end of the day to the boy who has made the best use of his dollar. One of the boys buys himself a splendid “book of games with [a] bright red cover,” and congratulates himself on how well he has invested his gift—one that promises a return throughout the year. The other boy, however, remembering a pauper child he had seen through the window of his grand home, and to whom he had given some bread and butter the day before, uses his dollar to buy the unfortunate waif warm stockings and mittens, a pair of stout boots, and a few sugarplums. Predictably, when the moment of reckoning comes, it is the latter who receives the mystery package, which proves to be a beautifully bound Bible.

Christmas, of course a wonder in itself, is also a time of surprises. In Mary C. Webster's *The Wonderful Christmas Tree*, published in Hartford in 1882, a father, traveling on business and feared lost at sea, appears unexpected and safe in the armchair beside his own hearth, while his wife and children are attending church on Christmas Eve.

And, speaking of Christmas trees, a word should be said about their evolution

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through the century. Now-a-days, the Christmas tree is likely to be a monumental evergreen that threatens to crowd one out of house and home. But judging from the illustrations which survive in children's literature from the mid 1800s, Christmas trees, even in well-to-do households, were relatively modest affairs indeed. Most, as depicted in a December 1859 woodcut reproduced in *Merry's Museum*, were small—small enough, in fact, to stand on a parlor table. They could also be dangerous—

for if they were illuminated at all, it was with the open flames of real candles, an ever-present threat to a dry and highly flammable evergreen. But apparently Christmas trees weren't always the now-traditional spruce or pine—at least the tree on which Santa is shown hanging gifts in an 1860 *Merry's Museum* illustration (p. 178) has to be either some sort of conservatory plant (perhaps a calemondin) or some broad-leafed evergreen.

As the century advanced, however, one can see in holiday illustrations the gradual evolution of the Christmas tree to its present size and character. By 1875, in an illustration of Emily Hartley's *Christmas with the Girls*, the tree, still candle-illuminated, has grown to three-quarter-length; and by 1882 the illustrator of *The Wonderful Christmas Tree* shows it at full-length and standing on the floor.¹⁹

Throughout the century, many of the gifts exchanged in honour of the "Krist-Kind" were small, and as the illustrations testify, were hung on the tree. Books, however, except for the tiny chapbooks of such publishers as Sidney Babcock and Mahlon Day, called "toys," were much too heavy to be hung from the branches of the typical Christmas tree. Books were commonly given, however, to children as well as to adults. Beginning around 1830, enterprising publishers began to issue annual anthologies of short prose pieces and poetry, aimed at the growing Christmas and New Year gift-giving trade. Typical were such Boston publications as *The*

Child's Annual of 1834 and *The Boys and Girls' Annual* of about a decade later. Few of these anthologies included much directly related to the holiday season; but most, whether paper-, or leather- or cloth-bound were attractively packaged to appeal to the eye, if not always to the mind and imagination.

Most of these gift books, like "Sister Lucy's " *Christmas Roses* (Boston: ca. 1848) and Pamela Coleman's *Children's Annual* (New York: 1853) were genuine compilations of pieces gathered from a variety of sources or written expressly for the anthology. But others, like *The Pet Annual* and *The Christmas Gift*, both put out by the New York reprint house of Leavitt and Allen, were merely reissues of earlier anthologies, some not even intended originally for the holiday trade.²⁰ Still others, like *My Own Annual* (Boston: 1849) were nothing more than a year's run of their publisher's juvenile magazine put out in an elegant new cover, with a specially printed gift-book title-page.²¹

Like the Christmas tree, the image of Santa Claus also underwent a considerable evolution during the course of the century, as the image of "Old Father Christmas" with his Yule-log, crown of holly, and wassail bowl amalgamated with the jovial Dutch burger "Kris Kringle" and his fellow-countryman St. Nicholas,

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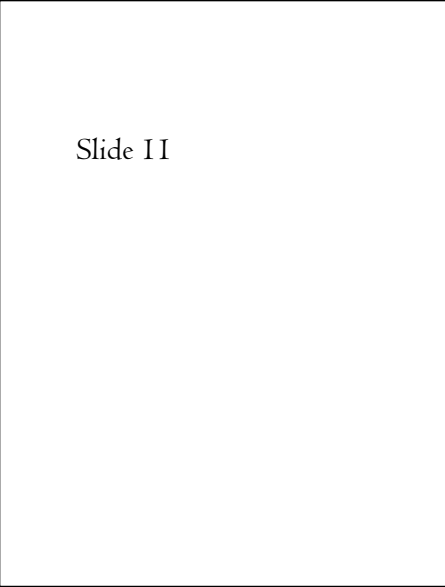
who granted children's wishes or rewarded their good behavior at Christmas time. Perhaps nowhere is this transformation so well illustrated as in three editions of the poem of the Episcopal scholar-teacher Clement C. Moore, who began the process with the publication of his now classic poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas" in the Troy (NY) *Sentinel* on December 23, 1823.

The first illustrated edition of "The Night Before Christmas," as Moore's poem is now more familiarly known, was issued by Henry Onderdonk, a fellow New York Anglican, in 1848. As one might suspect, while "ma in her kerchief and I in my cap" dozed in their beds, the "miniature sleigh and eight [truly] tiny reindeer" made their way into a very Dutch New Amsterdam, indeed! And the St. Nick, who descended the chimney because that was, after all, probably the only way to get into a tightly locked urban dwelling, looks jolly enough, but still very Dutch, as he proceeds to "fill all the stockings" before retreating up the chimney.

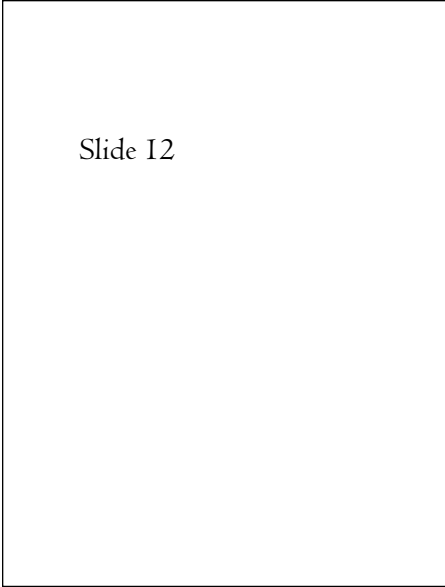
Two decades later, in the classic McLoughlin Bros. edition illustrated by Thomas Nast, rural romanticism has placed the same sleigh and reindeer in a Durrie-esque farmhouse setting which, apparently like its urban cousin, can be entered

only via the chimney. But how Santa has changed! In addition to having put on a good deal of weight—suggesting a benevolent Boss Tweed—Santa resembles nothing so much as a tame bear with a white-bearded face and a pipe—at least until he turns to depart on his poleward journey, where he is shown costumed in red and fur, more akin to the Santa familiar to today's children. And perhaps Santa has made his "getaway" just in time; for, as hinted above, the children who have benefited from his largesse look less like the wondering innocents that Moore describes, and

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typical of Nast's apparent inability to depict normally happy people, more like something out of a novel by Stephen King!

But, thankfully, we can jump ahead a couple of decades to the Porter & Coates edition of 1883. Santa still looks like a furry frog on its hind legs when depicted by W. T. Smedley, 'till we see him close-up through the eyes of Alfred Fredericks, another of the several illustrators of this edition. And, little by little throughout the closing decades of the century, the Santa of Nast is transformed into the image to which Twentieth-Century children have become accustomed.

And so, having come full-circle through the calendar, we, too, can settle down at Aunt Suzy's fireside to enjoy the nostalgia of the season.—But not for long! For, see: the Old Year totters on the precipice. Blink, and he's gone; as the Infant New Year mounts his sled on a distant peak to commence again the downhill course through another year.²²

Notes

1. *Merry Christmas ABC* (New York: McLoughlin Bros., c. 1899 and 1900). Text of a poem by Carolyn Wells, abridged.
2. Perry, Timothy. "A Rhyme for the Season" in *Merry's Museum* (Vol. 41, no. 1), Jan. 1861, p. 6–7.
3. *The Pet Annual: a Gift for All Seasons*, ed. Edward B. Fellows (New York: Leavitt & Allen, post 1849), engr. frontispiece by Sartain.
4. "Candlemas Day" in *Parley's Magazine* (Vol. 4, p. 43), Feb. 1836.
5. Sigourney, Lydia Howard Huntley. Valentine inscribed to Elizabeth Cogswell Dixon, Hartford, 1848. In Manuscript collections, Connecticut Historical Society.
6. "Our Picture Gallery—XII—George Washington" in *Our Boys and Girls—Olivier Optics Magazine* (Vol. 5, p. 69 and facing illustration by T. Nast), 13 March 1869.
7. Blake, Jno. Lourias, Jr. "April-Fool Day" in *The Boys' and Girls' Annual* (Boston: T. H. Carter & Co., 1845), p. 125–127.
8. Browne, H. H. "The May Queen" in *Our Boys and Girls* (Vol. 13, p. 401–402), June 1873.
9. Andrew, J. "May Day in the City" in *Our Boys and Girls* (Vol. 13, plate facing p. 289), May 1873.
10. "May Day, by the Author of Lights of Education" in *The Pearl; or Affection's Gift. A Christmas and New Year's Present* (Philadelphia: T. T. Ash, 1831), p. 162–181.
11. Mason, Lowell. "Independent Day" (song) in *Parley's Magazine* (Vol. 3, p. 162), July 1835.
12. "Juvenile Celebration of Independence" in *Ibid.* (Vol. 4, p. 250–251), July 1836.
13. "Four Thanksgivings Before Breakfast" in *The Child's Paper* (New York: American Tract Society), Vol. 6, p. 42 (Nov. 1857).
14. "Christmas" in *Stories and Legends—Uncle Sam's Library for Boys & Girls* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols & Co., 1853), p. 33–34.
15. "A Christmas Hymn" in *Children's Magazine* (Vol. 20, p. 273), December 1848.
16. Ford, Theodosia. *The Magic Mirror: a Christmas Story* (New York: Daniel Dana, Jr.,

1859).

17. Cousin Carrie, pseud. *Keep a Good Heart: a Story for the Merry Christmas Time* (New York: D. Appleton, 1865).
18. *The Christmas Eve. A Tale from the German* (Boston: William Crosby & Co., and E. P. Peabody, 1842).
19. Webster, Mary C. *The Wonderful Christmas Tree! A Story in Rhyme* (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1882).
20. *The Pet Annual*, for example, is composed of “pieces . . . written by the pupils of the Ward or Public Schools of the City of New York, as a part of their exercises, whilst pursuing their studies,” and had appeared in that form prior to their reissue by Leavitt & Allen.
21. *My Own Annual* is a reissue with gift-book title page of *Mark Forrester's Boys' and Girls' Magazine* (1849).
22. G. L. Brown. “Farewell to the Old Year” (woodcut) in *Merry's Museum* (Vol. 8, p. 186–7), Dec. 1844. Note that while this illustration appears in an 1844 periodical, it probably first appeared elsewhere in 1835, as the last date “Father Time” is recording is 1835!

Jewish Ghost Stories for Children

Michele Palmer

The earliest Jewish ghost story is found in the Bible, when Saul invokes the ghost of the prophet Samuel. Since then, Jewish writers have been recounting ghost stories in the Talmud, Hasidic tales and folklore. Some of these stories are found in Howard Schwartz' collection: *Lilith's Cave: Jewish Tales of the Supernatural*. However, very few of them are suitable for children, either because of explicit sexual references, or their generally bleak, pessimistic outlook.

Of contemporary Jewish ghost stories for children, I'm aware of only three: *The Shadow Children*, by Steven Schnur, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, by Jane Yolen and my own, *The Hanukkah Ghosts*. Of these, the last two are technically time-travel stories: that is, the protagonist steps back into time and meets seemingly real people, as opposed to wispy creatures that appear in the present.

Interestingly, all three of these books are about the Holocaust. Since ghosts often come back to resolve unfinished business—or characters are drawn into the past to help them resolve unfinished business—we can see why the Holocaust becomes a theme for contemporary Jewish ghost stories for children.

Malka Penn is the pseudonym for Michele Palmer. She is also the author of The Miracle of the Potato Latkes which received a starred review in School Library Journal.

ABC Meeting with Michele Palmer, January 10, 1999

Roger Crossgrove

Some twenty members of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Book Collectors of Children's Literature met at the Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT on January 10, 1999, where we were treated to a most interesting presentation of Jewish ghost stories for children by Michele Palmer (Malka Penn), the author of *The Hannukah Ghosts*, which was published by Holiday House in 1997.

In addition to those books that she mentions in her summary review, she read from and we looked at a number of additional books on the subject:

Haunts: Five Hair-Raising Tales by Angela Medeards, illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman.

Zlateh the Goat and Other Stories by Isaac Bashevis Singer, illustrated by Maurice Sendak.

The Golem retold and illustrated by David Wisniewski.

Here There be Ghosts by Jane Yolen.

The Dark Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural by Patricia McKissack, illustrated by Brian Pinkney.

The Art of the Book & the Book as Art

Billie Levy

The National Yiddish Book Center on the campus of Hampshire College in Amherst, MA was the site of the first symposium by the new Hampshire College Center for the Book on March 28, 1999. "The Art of the Book & the Book as Art" offered "an insider's view of the range of developments in the world of book-making and highlight[ed] contributions of distinguished book artists" stated the program. After a welcome and introduction by Gregory S. Prince, Jr., President of Hampshire College, James Wald, Assoc. Prof. of History and Sura Levine, Assoc. Prof. Of Art History, both at Hampshire College, added comments on the importance of paper mills in the 18th and 19th centuries to the development of the book arts. Leonard Baskin's importance to the book arts in the Pioneer Valley was noted.

Martin Antonetti, formerly at the Grolier Club in New York, is now Curator of Rare Books, Mortimer Rare Book Room, William Alan Neilson Library, Smith College, and spoke on "Collecting the Book Arts: First the Good News..." He noted that book collecting on college campuses was not accepted at first. There was no uniform context in which books were discussed or bought and sold. The "Books Arts 2000" conference held recently at the University of Alabama showed the many skills and disciplines brought to the book arts. He sees the book arts as a means to an end, the end being the user or reader. He feels books should be touched, handled physically, become interactive. He thinks we should "demand exhibitions with no glass cases." In his view the book arts should initiate change.

"Form & Content: The Art of the Book in the Pioneer Valley" was the topic chosen by Bibliotect David P. Bourbeau, who organized the fine book exhibit in the library of the College. He showed slides of all aspects of the book arts in the Pioneer Valley, noting that the Gehenna Press, operated by Leonard Baskin, is the premier press in the U.S. in the later half of this century.

After a brief break, David Price, Assoc. Prof. of Germanic Languages at the University of Texas in Austin, presented slides and comments on the Bible through

the ages, beginning with the 1491 first octavo edition of the Bible, to the 1498 first complete edition of the Bible in Hebrew, on to Luther, Tyndale, the Geneva Bible of 1560, the Bishop's Bible and then the King James version of the Bible, which was not illustrated and did not support current opinions.

Price's talk led into the discussion by Barry Moser of his just completed Bible, a task he said he felt compelled to do. He has illustrated the Old and New Testaments with 230 striking wood engravings, first illustrating the New Testament, as tradition demanded, and then the Old Testament. He originally conceived Adam and Eve as African, but thought he should go with the image of the writers of the text, who were Semitic; so he depicted them as a naked middle aged white couple. He never represented God, but suggested His presence by smoke, water and storms. Moser used contemporary people as models: Donald Hall as Ecclesiastes, Leonard Baskin as the hewer of the 10 commandments and himself as John the Baptist with his head on the platter. Beginning at the end of the Bible, he worked backwards to the Garden of Eden as the last illustration he completed since he said he knew the crucifixion scene would be the most difficult for him to do and he wanted to work on it first. His concept changed as he completed other illustrations and he returned to the picture and completely re-did it with a new emphasis. He commented that his Bible was not meant to be a lectern Bible, but was meant to be held in the hand. He went into this challenge that he had wanted to do all his life with "a fear of the unknown".

"The Alchemy of Books: Materials, Mythology and Structure" was presented by Daniel E. Kelm, Book Artist of The Wide Awake Garage and Garage Annex School of the Book Arts. As a boy he fell in love with chemistry and tried with disastrous results to make perfume and later rockets. His photographer father influenced him to finally begin to make non-traditional books with a sense of surprise that pleases him. He feels the binding can enhance the experience of the book, and showed a tactile cover to Leonard Baskin that Baskin at first disapproved and then admitted that Kelm was correct in his concept. Integration of materials and text is a large part of Kelm's work as he marries the quality of the material with the stories.

Carol J. Blinn operates her Warwick Press printing poetry, pop-ups, cards, etc. She gave great credit to her mother, who knew how to work with tools, gave her children nature walks and taught them crafts and independence. As she showed

slides of her work room she also gave credit for her success to printers and friends Harold McGrath and Arlo Werner.

The symposium closed with remarks by Neil A. Zagorin, Bibliographer at the National Yiddish Book Center, on “De-speckling, Deskewing and the Quest for a Proper Peacock: the Non-binary Process of Book-Making in the Binary Age.” The Center is now working on digitizing as many of their one million books as possible, but there are still many problems to solve before that can happen. With only about 40,000 titles in Yiddish in existence in the world the National Yiddish Book Center is trying to preserve all they can.

A reception followed the symposium which offered opportunity to have the recent book by Richard Michelson, *Granpa's Gamble*, illustrated by Barry Moser, autographed. Michelson is a prize-winning poet and owner of Michelson Galleries in Northampton, MA which specializes in artists of the Pioneer Valley. Eric Carle and his wife were present and happy that his “Eric Carle Museum for Picture Book Art,” to be built on the Hampshire College campus, will be completed in three years. Among many other book people in attendance were David Godine of Boston and Hosie Baskin, son of Leonard Baskin, as well as ABC members Bina Williams and Billie Levy. The overflow crowd bodes well for the new Center for the Book and the projected two symposiums each year to be presented on different aspects of the Book Arts.

1999 Antiquarian Book Fairs

April 15–18	New York Ant. Bk Fr	New York, NY
April 30–May 3	Chicago Ant. Bk Fr	Chicago, IL
May 1–2	Burbank Bk Fr	Burbank, CA
May 2	Vermont Ant. Bk Fr	S. Burlington, VT
May 14–15	Philadelphia Ant. Bk Fr	Fort Washington, PA
May 28–31	PBFA International Bk Fr	London, England
May 30	New England Bk Fr	Concord, NH
June 26	Cooperstown Ant. Bk Fr	Cooperstown, NY
July 10	Berkshire Bk Fr	Stockbridge, MA
July 17–18	Santa Monica Bk Fr	Santa Monica, CA
July 31	Searles Castle Bk Fr	Great Barrington, MA
Aug. 1	Vermont Antiq. Bk Fr	Woodstock, VT
Oct. 2–3	Pasadena Antiq. Bk Fr	Pasadena, CA
Oct. 30–31	Long Island Antiq. Bk Fr	Garden City, NY
Nov. 5–7	Boston Antiq. Bk Fr	Boston, MA

Listings by Barbara and Rocco Verrilli

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Although we accept typewritten manuscripts, someone on the newsletter staff must input the material into a computer word-processing program in order for the material to be usable by us. Consequently, it is greatly appreciated when submissions are made on a computer disk. Disks will be returned promptly, but please keep a backup of your file. They may be formatted for the PC or for the Macintosh. Any common word processing program that has word-wrap capabilities may be used, but WordPerfect or Word is strongly preferred. A printout of all submitted files should be included, as well as a note explaining what application was used. To make our job a little easier, please use one space only between sentences, and paragraph indents rather than extra lines between paragraphs.

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