

FATHER'S DESIRE TO AMUSE HIS CHILDREN GAVE TO WORLD "TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS"

Dr. Clement B. Moore Inspired 100 Years Ago Today to Write Santa Claus Poem Which Has Thrilled All Humanity. Now Visualized in Movies to Aid Helpless Youngsters

"TWAS the night before Christmas,"
One hundred years ago—
When all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
"Sh-h-h-h-h-h-h-h."
"Are all the little tots in bed?
"Is the sandman nodding every drowsy little head?
"You can't go to sleep, you say. Well, we'll have to see what we can do about that."
A tall gentleman with twinkly eyes, in a purple velvet coat and fancy waistcoat—the kind they used to wear 'way back in Colonial days—was speaking. Funny children, his children: just couldn't go to sleep on the night before Christmas.
"Hang up your stockings and come here," he called to them.
"Hang up their stockings! Quick as a flash six different stockings dangled over the fireplace.
"Now, I have a surprise for you," he said.
A surprise! O-o-o-o-o-h!

Wanamaker, George Arliss, George W. Wickerman, Mrs. Gouverneur Morris, Otto H. Kahn, Conde Nast and Judge Franklin Hoyt.

The scenes of the picture are first laid in the home of Dr. Moore, the settings of which were worked out by descendants of the Moore family and by Miss Sophie Smith, of the Film Mutual Benefit Bureau.

The wind goes Wh-o-o-o-o-o-o over the hill where the old Moore home stood, and the mouths of the little Moores round into "O's" of bliss as their father begins to tell them his poem.

The children, after they have listened for the reindeer, and after they have anxiously peered into the chimney, are

Old St. Nicholas himself poses for his picture before tackling the job of filling the stockings

has been translated into every language in the world.
Every year of Christmastime a holly

"Twas the Night Before Christmas"

Six tasseled woolen nightcaps rose over six pairs of pink ears, as the little folks peered into the great open fireplace—and listened.
The black-and-white spaniel wagged its tail restlessly.
"Twas the night before Christmas," began the father.
Not a sound from the youngsters.
"When all through the house," he continued
"Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap.
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow,
Gave the luster of midday to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his courses they ran,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name."
You see, Dr. Clement B. Moore, who was speaking, lived with his family at a large country estate called "Chelsea," in what used to be New York City. He had been helping his wife pack Christmas baskets for the poor who lived about their place. Mrs. Moore found that she was short of one turkey.
"Clement," she said, "go down to the market and get me another turkey."
So Dr. Moore put on his heavy coat and went down to the market for the fowl.

Own Children Were First to Hear Poem

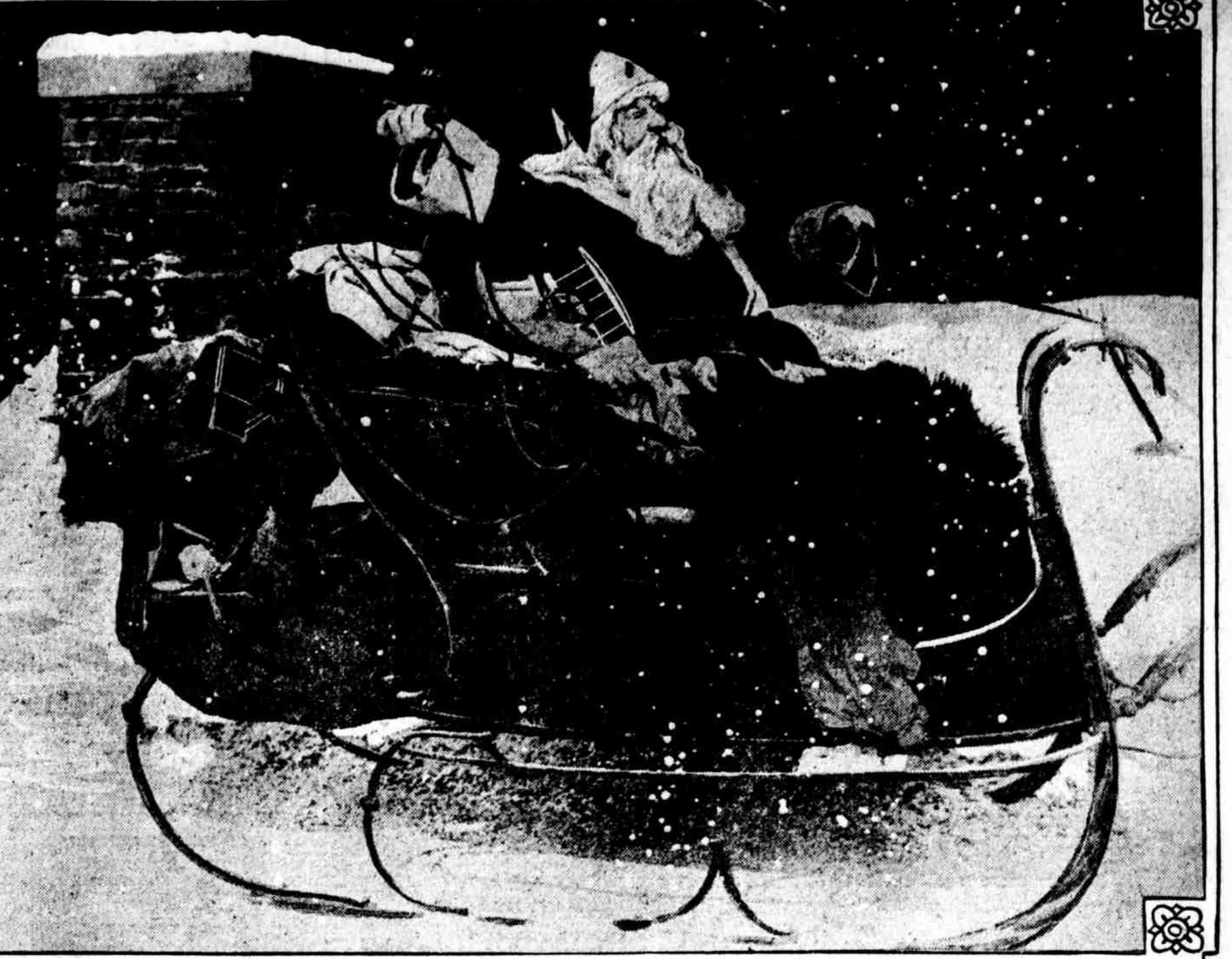
On his way home, his mind filled with Christmas legends and thoughts about gifts, he found himself composing a poem about St. Nicholas—for his children.
It came so fast he had to stop every few minutes to jot down notes. When he arrived home, he read it to his children as a surprise. He called the poem, "A Visit From St. Nicholas," but throughout the years it has been changed to "The Night Before Christmas."
Didn't you feel that that poem had always been in existence? As long as Santa Claus had been?
You heard Santa call—
Now Dasher! now Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen!
On Comet! on Cupid! on Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away, all!
And you say—
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane blow,
When they meet with an obstacle,
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys and St. Nicholas, too.

It was Dr. Moore who wrote that poem, on December 21, 1822—just 100 years ago. Some folk say that if the Moores hadn't been charitable, and if Dr. Moore hadn't gone to market for that turkey, the poem might never have come to him. And the children of the world might never have had this bit of Christmas magic.
Dr. Moore didn't think the poem was good enough to publish. The following Christmas, 1823, a paper, the Troy Sentinel, published it. Since then it



wreath is placed beneath Dr. Moore's picture, which hangs in the General Theological Seminary in New York City, where he was professor of Oriental and Greek literature at the time he wrote the poem. This is a tribute to the dreams and delight he has brought to the children of all the world.
This year—the 100th anniversary of the writing of the poem—it has been reincarnated from words into pictures.
A motion-picture has been made of the poem so that children actually can see Santa and his mystic reindeer.
The picture was put out by the Film Mutual Benefit Bureau of America, which is operated for the benefit of the American Committee for Devastated France, under Anne Morgan, and the Maternity Center of New York, under Mabel Choate. The proceeds from the showings of the picture go to the two benefits.
The idea of putting the poem into pictures grew out of charity work, as did the poem itself.
Among those on the advisory committee for the picture are Rodman

The prancing and pawing of each little hoof,
As I drew in my head, or was turning round,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had slung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes-how they twinkled! His dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.
The stump of his pipe he held tight in his teeth,



Santa Claus arrives at the housetop laden with toys for the happy children slumbering below



And the smoke it circled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a round little belly,
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
Every child who sees the picture can see St. Nicholas climb up the Chelsea sea chimney and disappear into its depths, cautiously. And then—and then—oh, jolly fun—see him emerge all sooty and dirty from the fireplace.
The children have left him an appetizing supper, which has been first noticed by the dog. When everything is all still, the black and white spaniel comes back downstairs to investigate. For a moment he is tempted by the supper. Then he remembers that St. Nicholas is the friend of good children and little dogs, and he steals sorrowfully away.
Santa sees him. He is touched by the animal's sacrifice. He changes the whip he had brought for him for a ball and fine collar.
Gave Gift of Joy to the Entire World
Then Jack Frost comes into the picture. He sprinkles the world with white and shimmering snow that the world may be filled with the pure color of children's souls and sincerity. The fairy elves and Mother Goose who weave childhood's lyric laughter into life, race through the minds of Dr. Moore's sleeping little ones—and so are seen in the picture.
Then Santa—
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,

And away they flew like the down of a thistle!
But I heard him exclaim ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night."
The next morning the dog tugs at the bedclothes of the little ones, and with delighted barks arouses them—very early—to see the happy traces of St. Nicholas' visit.
Thus one man, who was moved by the spirit of Christmas, of bringing joy to all, brought a gift—a bit of fancied fairyland—to the whole world, and made the Yuletide more blessed for children.
"Tis the night before Christmas.
Is every little one in bed?
Is the sandman nodding every little head?
Sh-h-h-h-h-h-h. List to Santa:
"Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good-night."

Dr. Moore was born at Chelsea House, July 15, 1781. His father was the Rev. Benjamin Moore, second Bishop of New York, whose somewhat austere portrait hangs beside that of his son on the north wall of the rectory near the altar upon which the faculty sit at meals. His maternal grandfather, Major Thomas Clarke, a retired officer of the British Army, was the original owner of Chelsea. At that time, this neighborhood was an outlying suburb of the sprawling town of New York. Later, it was merged into Greenwich Village, and today it is unadmittedly endeavoring to resist the encroachments of the real estate speculators on all sides. It is perhaps the last complete relic of the New York of the early part of the last century.
All of the country about Chelsea was open and rolling, and the houses stood on a hill that was level when the General Theological Seminary buildings were started.
In due course of time Moore inherited the property from his father. The city was beginning to move up toward the farm-country about Chelsea, but probably even Moore did not dream that it would spread as it did before he died in 1823. He was a wealthy man, according to the estimate of that day, and in 1818 he signified his generosity by donating a square block of the land surrounding Chelsea House to the Protestant Episcopal Church, with the proviso that it should be used for the erection of a seminary. The seminary was started forthwith, and in 1821 Moore joined its faculty as professor of Greek and Hebrew, for he was widely known as an accomplished scholar.
The story of how the poem came to be printed is interesting in itself. Shortly after Christmas, a daughter of the Rev. Dr. Henry Hart, of St. Paul's Church, Troy, happened to be visiting one of Dr. Moore's daughters at Chelsea House, and the children read her the poem. She copied it in her album, and just before Christmas, in 1823, she sent a copy to the editor of the Troy Sentinel, who published it on December 23, together with a quaint wood-cut illustration. The paper upon which the poem and the picture were printed was of the best quality, and it was widely known as an accomplished scholar.

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Santa Claus in his workshop at the North Pole telling fairy elves of his coming visit to great world