



# Victoria's Messenger



December 2009/January 2010

The Newsletter of the Victorian Society at Falls Church, VA

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## IMPORTANT VICTORIAN SOCIETY NEWS – PLEASE TAKE NOTE

Membership renewal notices for the next membership year (October 2009-September 2010) were mailed out with the previous Messenger. If you have not sent in your renewal, please do so immediately (to the P.O. Box listed below). **If we do not receive your renewal by November 30, your name will be removed from the roster.** Please contact our membership chair, Gus Knapp, 703-241-2751, if you have any questions about your membership. THANKS!

*What a great way to get the holidays started in true Victorian fashion...*

### *The Victorian Society Annual Christmas Party*



*All Victorian Society members are invited to join us at the annual Victorian Society Christmas party, to be held on Saturday, December 12, from 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. at the Victorian home of Kent and Cathy Taylor (508 Lincoln Avenue, Falls Church). For the past several years we have held our Christmas party at Kent and Cathy's lovely home*

and it is wonderful to be invited back. This year it is sure to be a festive event with good food (pot luck supper), good company, and lots of good holiday cheer.

Please note that guests should arrive at the Taylor's at 7 p.m. so that we can begin to set up the table with your delicious dishes and remember to bring whatever serving utensils are needed for your dish. Our plan is to begin food service promptly at 7:30 so your dishes should be on the table by that time. At approximately 9:30 p.m. we will begin clean-up so that we can be finished by 10 p.m.

Make sure that you sign up today and then you won't miss out on any of the fun! Off-street parking on Lincoln Avenue is available; Victorian dress or party attire is recommended **Please contact Midge Wang, 703-534-8394 to RSVP and to let her know what you are bringing for the pot luck.**

*"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is usually more desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute...endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink and means of warmth...What shall I put you down for?"*

*-Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol*

Not only did the Victorians exchange gifts with their family and friends, they shared what they had with those less fortunate. Charity often took the form of delivering dinners or gift boxes to the poor on Christmas Day or pledging money to help the needy.

### *So once again as part of our Christmas Party festivity we will be collecting gift cards for Homestretch.*

Homestretch is a local organization dedicated to helping the homeless achieve self sufficiency through financial assistance, transitional housing, and job and life skills training. In Fairfax County, 60% of the homeless are families, and the average age of a homeless person is nine years old. Because Homestretch sets clients up in transitional housing, they are constantly in need of gift cards to Wal-Mart, Target, grocery stores, and drug stores. This year, when you are shopping for your food to bring to the party, please consider adding a gift card for Homestretch in the Victorian tradition of assisting those in need at the Holidays!

### **Sunday, December 20 – Scrooge, The Musical, at the Riverside Dinner Theater**

We have a large group heading off to our favorite dinner theater for a Sunday matinee performance of *Scrooge, The Musical*. If you reserved a ticket, please remember that this is a matinee and you should arrive at the theater around 1:00 p.m. For directions and other information (including menu items) about the theater go to [www.riversidedt.com](http://www.riversidedt.com). And, if you feel inclined to dress in period attire, please feel free to do so.

## Thursday, December 31 – Watch Night in Falls Church



As we did last year, we are planning to be part of the Falls Church Watch Night festivities again. We hope to have a Victorian photo parlor where

members of the public will be able to dress in Victorian fashions and have their photos taken. If you would like to volunteer and help us “dress” those wishing to have their photo taken, please contact Midge Wang at 703-534-8393. If you’re in the area, stop by and say hello to your fellow Victorians or have your photo taken and printed for a nominal fee.

*Let's start the New Year off right!*



**Saturday, January 16, In Vogue: Fashion Meets Art:** Caroline Hottenstein will display her collection of nineteenth century fashion art and explains its influence on the fashion-conscious lady. See examples of fashion plates, illustrations, publications, and magazines and learn about the artists who created this “art of style.” After Caroline’s presentation, we’ll have a delicious cream tea in the Cherry Hill dining room. And, Caroline is down-sizing her collection of Victorian-era clothing, trims, and accessories (parasols, fans, etc.) so she’ll have many, many items there for sale. This is perfect for those of you who are making and trimming your clothes or just starting out with assembling ‘living history’ costumes. This is certainly a fun way to spend a winter’s afternoon! We’ll begin at 1:00 p.m. at Cherry Hill Farmhouse. **Cost is a mere \$5.00 per person and we are limited to 20 people and only have a few seats left so be sure to sign up soon. Call Midge Wang (703-534-8394) to RSVP.**

### Saturday, January 16, Book Discussion Group

For our first book of 2010 we’ve selected a work on non-fiction about the relationship between Mary Todd Lincoln and her dressmaker, Mrs. Keckly. *Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Keckly: The Remarkable Story of the Friendship Between a First Lady and a Former Slave* by Jennifer Fleischner is a double biography that explores the unique friendship these two women shared. **The discussion starts at 7:00 at Linda Lau’s house; be sure to RSVP Linda at (703) 425-0292 so she knows how many to expect. Space is limited!**

## Sunday, January 17, Tea in Waynesboro, PA

We’ve again made arrangements to have tea at June and Harold Mumma’s wonderful Victorian house in Waynesboro, PA (it’s only about a 2½ drive from Falls Church). As those who have been to one of June’s teas can fully attest to, June hosts an absolutely fantastic tea; it will likely be the best tea that you will ever have a chance to attend. If you’ve not seen June’s house and her beautiful Christmas decorations, then it’s worth the trip just for that. So that we can be back on the road prior to dark, the tea will start at 1 p.m. and be over at 3 p.m. **Cost of the tea will be \$21 per person (make check payable to the VSFC); contact Midge Wang at 703-534-8394 to make your reservation and for car pool information. In case of inclement weather, we will postpone this outing.**

## Saturday, January 30, Burn’s Night Dinner

Join us for one of the most popular events on the Society’s calendar. The celebration will begin at 6:00 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church in Falls Church (located right on Route 7). As in previous years a potluck supper will be served along with the traditional haggis and a wee bit of Scotch. We’ll also have the usual toasts, reciting of verse, music, and stories and we’ll have a silent auction with some wonderful goodies for you to bid on. **Contact Midge Wang to reserve your seat(s). When calling please let them know the number of people who will be attending and what you would like to bring to the potluck supper. In order to cover the cost of the room, a \$10 donation will be requested from each person attending so please have your donation ready as you arrive.**



## Your Christmas Shopping Made Easy

In the Victorian era books were considered a perfect gift for just about anyone – family, friends, male, female, young or old. And, it’s still true today. So, if there’s someone on your Christmas list who likes history, cooking, or afternoon tea then we have the perfect gifts – three different books, all researched and written by VSFC members. And, all proceeds go to preservation and educational initiatives sponsored by the VSFC.

For those who love history, then *Victorian Falls Church* should definitely be on your list. Covering the years 1850 – 1910, *Victorian Falls Church* contains 210 vintage photos of the people, places, and events that

turned Falls Church from a sleepy little village into a vibrant and community-minded town and one of the premier communities in Northern Virginia. Cost is \$20 per book.

Our cookbook *Victorian Entertaining* contains Victorian Society favorite recipes for such events as a holiday breakfast, a family supper and a Titanic dinner party, a Valentine's tea, a Robert Burns night supper and a lawn bowling picnic. Something for every Victorian occasion. Cost is \$10 per book.

And, our latest cookbook, *Afternoon Tea in the Victorian Tradition* contains over 100 modern and vintage recipes of savories, scones and muffins, sweets, and accompaniments such as faux clotted cream and fruited butters, all of which are suitable for an afternoon tea, lunch, or even an informal dinner. Plus there are 20 pages devoted to historical information and customs, tea accessories and accoutrements, etiquette, theme teas, and how to arrange a tea table. Cost is \$12 per book or \$10 if you buy two or more, or either of our other books.

These books are sure to please those on your holiday gift list – family, friends, teachers, etc. **Contact Linda Lau at 703-425-0292 to reserve your copy.**

## Christmas Programs Around the Area

The 8th Victorian Christmas Celebration will be held at the Dr. Samuel Mudd Home (3725 Dr. Samuel Mudd Road, Waldorf, MD 20601) on December 5 and 6, 2009, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Cost is \$7 for adults and \$2 for children. Reservations are not required. They will have music, refreshments, Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus, Civil War soldiers, and a walk through tour of the house. The house will be decorated as it would have been in the Victorian era.

Christmas Through the Ages at Liberia Plantation. December 11 - 12, 5 - 8.30 p.m. Walk through different centuries of Christmas celebration at Liberia mansion. Explore Christmas in 1862, 1900, 1945 and 1970. Advance tickets \$15. \$20 day of event. Liberia Plantation House, Manassas. 703-368-1873.

Saturday, December 12, Christmas in Camp at Fort Ward (Alexandria, VA) interprets how Christmas was observed during the Civil War. The program features living history interpreters, a Victorian Christmas tree, period music, refreshments, readings of "The Night Before Christmas" and a patriotic Santa Claus; from noon – 4 p.m.; suggested donation \$2 adults, \$1 kids.

## Historic Trail Marker Dedication



On Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, members of the Victorian Society at Falls Church along with City Councilman Dave Snyder, City Manager Wyatt Shields, members of the Falls Church Historical Commission, and other city officials and citizens, gathered at two of Falls Church's most historic homes, the DePutron House and Mt. Hope, to participate in the unveiling of the latest two Historic Trail Markers. The unveiling culminates a multi-year effort by the VSFC to raise the \$3,200 required to produce and install these markers. Councilman Snyder noted during the dedication that it was a partnership with the VSFC and the City, along with the coordinating efforts of local resident Barbara Cram and the cooperation of property owners Cathy and Kent Taylor and Midge Wang, Terry Hooper and Gus Knapp that made these markers possible. The VSFC wants to express its gratitude to its members for supporting our fund raising efforts, and Barbara Cram, the Historical Commission, and the City for their help and support in procuring and installing the markers.

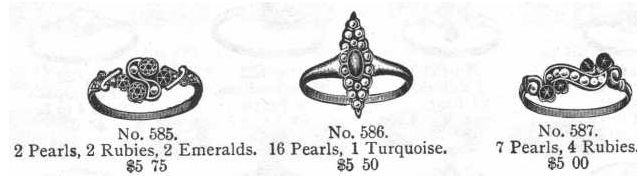


### Want to Meet New Exciting People?

Victoria's Messenger is seeking someone who enjoys getting to know people, who can interview new members periodically and write up a short paragraph about each. We're talking about the "Meet Your Fellow Members" column that has been covered by Maryll Kleibrink for the past several years. Although we all share a common interest in Victoriana, we have arrived at this point via many different and interesting paths. Moreover, some of us may share hidden talents and interests that are unrelated to the Victorian era. By teasing out this information and sharing it in the pages of our newsletter, many commonalities have been discovered and friendships cemented. If you would like to take on this role, please contact Linda Lau at [victdelit@aol.com](mailto:victdelit@aol.com).

## The Language of Jewels

No doubt you've heard of the language of flowers, that is well-documented in many Victorian books. But perhaps you didn't know that there is a language of jewels. According to *The Home Instructor* (1885) "it is customary among lovers and friends to notice the significance attached to the various stones in making birthday, engagement and wedding presents."



Take a look at this list from *Our Department* (1880); perhaps it will help you when selecting the perfect birthday or Christmas present.

January – Garnet: constancy and fidelity  
 February – Amethyst: sincerity  
 March – Bloodstone: courage  
 April – Sapphire: repentance  
 May – Emerald: success in love  
 June – Agate: health and long life  
 July - Ruby: forgetfulness of, and exemption from vexations caused by friendship and love  
 August – Sardonyx: conjugal fidelity  
 September – Chrysolite: freedom from evil passions and sadness of mind  
 October – Opal: hope and faith  
 November – Topaz: fidelity and friendship  
 December – Turquoise: prosperity



And, for those precious stones not included above:

Diamond: innocence  
 Pearl: purity  
 Cornelian: contented mind  
 Moonstone: protects from danger  
 Heliotrope: causing the owner to walk invisible



### December

*If cold December gave you birth,  
 The month of snow and ice and mirth,  
 Place on your hand a Turquoise blue—  
 Success will bless you if you do.*

### January

*By those who in this month are born  
 No gem save Garnets should be worn;  
 They will insure you constancy,  
 True friendship and fidelity.*

From *Polite Life and Etiquette*, 1891

## CHRISTMAS IN WASHINGTON 1840

Excerpts from  
 "In Old Washington (Christmas)"  
 By James Croggon, *The Evening Star*,  
 December 11, 1910

"The people of Washington of three score and ten years ago and over, were not accustomed to observe the holidays to anything like the extent they observe them in the present day. With the majority of people Christmas only was a holiday, and New Year day was a half holiday to some. In the executive departments, if the condition of the business permitted, holiday was given the employees from noon the 24th to the 26th instant; but during Christmas week, although the offices were open for business, but few employees made full time, for some of the clerks were absenting themselves, leaving their associates to keep up the pressing routine work. The sentiment, however, was prevalent in all the departments, in some instances accented by the smell of the breath or the unsteady walk of bibulous employees, who, however, did not receive a reprimand, unless there was some misbehavior committed. There were tokens of appreciation passing around the office, and, as a rule, the subordinates were more fortunate than those higher up. Now and then some popular officer would receive such costly gift as a watch or piece of plate; and subsequently all on the clerical roll and below received silver pencils and fine pen knives on New Year eve.

The private schools were closed for holiday week, but the two public schools which were in operation until 1844, when the number was increased by two, usually closed on the day before Christmas and sometimes opened again the day after, but study during the week was a matter of form to the few pupils in attendance, more play than study. Not infrequently, however, were the public schools closed for the week by consent of the trustees.

There were then the Center Market...and the Capitol Hill Market...There was some preparation by the dealers for the holidays, but very primitive were the decorations of the stores. The market was supplied then with a greater portion of game than at present, in proportion to the population; venison, possum, rabbit, etc., were much sought for, wild turkey and wild duck were in profusion, while domestic fowl for the time contributed to the reduction of the butchers' traffic; nevertheless it was the custom of the butchers at the Christmas time to have lean cuts of beef on exhibition, for few families expected to make their Christmas dinner without the head of beef. The custom of mince pies at Christmas occasioned a ready sale of beef for the mincemeat, but little mincemeat being used unless made at home.

The fire companies also observed the day...It was the custom of the members to meet at the engine house at any time after midnight and toward daylight the bells were rung, the bonfires lighted, drinkables were found everywhere, for the prohibition movement had not taken much hold, and pandemonium reigned.

The Sunday school entertainments had not then come into vogue. Christmas trees were to a limited extent used. Of course, there was the Christmas spirit at the hotels...These taverns usually had large bowls of eggnog, apple toddy and various other drinkables to regale their friends, and money was out of the question.

The variety and fancy stores attracted customers, that of George Savage...being the mecca of downtown boys. Metal toys, wooden hobby-horses, wagons and sleighs were here, but the favorite was the toy cannon for the boys, and false faces attracted the girls...the most popular store of Ailer & Thyson,...was a leading one, especially for dressed dolls, and at this time these were mostly of papier mache or wood...The little confectionary of George Norbeck...carried such a stock of toys in addition to confectionery that but few customers could be admitted at a time. On 6th street between F and G streets Michael and Christian Briel had a confectionery, where candy canes, baskets, etc., were made for the trade and for their market stands.”



## Kettle-Drums Entertaining the White House Way

Recently while doing some research I came across this notice in the December 29, 1877, *Washington Post*: “The First Kettle Drum at the White House.” The article went on to say “On Thursday the first White House “kettle-drum” on record took place. The invitations were written informally, being written on Miss Platt’s [a young friend of First Lady Lucy Hayes] visiting card, and mentioning incidentally, “Tea at 5 o’clock – Executive Mansion...Tea and light refreshments, including ices, were handed around. The company remained only until about 6 o’clock.”

Naturally, I wondered what a ‘kettle-drum’ was and why was it called that as opposed to say, a tea. After a little Google searching, I found a thorough description in the *Social Mirror: a Complete Treatise on the Laws, Rules, and Usages that Govern Our Most Refined Homes and Social Circles* (1888):

“The Kettle-drum.—A kettle-drum is only a reception with another name. It is, generally, a little less formal than the ordinary reception. Guests remain any length of time, within the stated hours, they choose; and conversation and, perhaps, music is the order of entertainment.

Its Origin.—The term, “kettle-drum,” is said to have originated among officers’ wives who, limited in the elegant facilities of social life by the exigencies of garrison surroundings, invited their friends to informal entertainments, in which the refreshments were served on the drum-head. They could not set out their own dainty china, neither could they rely on the trained servant or caterer they had been accustomed to at home, so they served their cup of tea, rolls, or sandwiches, from such dishes as they could command, and geniality, pleasant conversation and improvised music more than compensated for the lack of elaborate appointments.

The Kettle-drum Proper.—The kettle-drum proper should carry out the original significance of the term, in being simple and informal as to the refreshments and all appointments. True, it may be conducted after the same form as that described under “Receptions,” but less ceremony is more in keeping. The ladies receive standing, the same as at receptions, but a lady of the family, or a friend, presides at the tea urn, and may or may not be assisted by a man-servant or maid-servant.

Some pretty caprices indulged in by hostesses at these affairs, were to have a tiny drum beaten at intervals near the tea-table, and the young lady who served the tea was costumed natively as a *vivandiere*.

Kettle-drums are always held in the afternoon; the refreshments consist of tea, coffee, chocolate, sandwiches, buns and cake; and the invitation is simply the addition to the visiting card of the words, “kettle-drum,” with date and hour. The dress is the same as for a reception.”

According to the *Social Mirror* appropriate daytime reception dress for a lady is “a visiting costume with bonnet. These should be as handsome as the wardrobe affords. Natural flowers may be added if desired.” Gentlemen should be in “morning dress.” The *Washington Post* article noted that the President’s three oldest sons were present and that “they wore dress suits, but most of the others present, both gentlemen and ladies, wore walking dresses (I’m sure this is just poor wording on the part of the *Post* reporter or a typographical error; I can’t imagine a gentleman wearing a walking dress to the White House!!!). Mrs. Hayes wore a black silk dress with white lace at the throat. Miss Platt wore a dark brown visiting toilet and Miss

Foote [another family friend] wore a blue cashmere polonaise over blue silk.

As you make your holiday entertaining plans, why not do what the White House did in 1877 and host your first “kettle-drum.”



## Christmas Carols

Compiled by Ron Anzalone and Linda Lau

Some of our favorite Christmas carols were composed, adapted, or set to music during the Victorian era. And, it was also during the Victorian era that these carols became a standard part of holiday church services.



“Joy to the World,” with 18<sup>th</sup> century music and lyrics by G.F. Handel and Isaac Watts, was arranged in its modern form in 1830.

The first known compilation of “The First Noël”, “I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In” and “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” was in “Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern” (1833) by William B. Sandys.

“Once in Royal David’s City,” an 1848 poem, was set to music in 1849.

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” appeared in 1850.

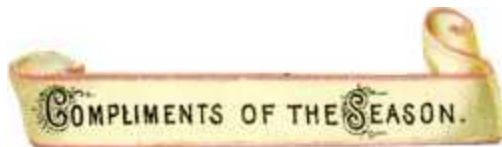
“O Come All Ye Faithful” was translated from Latin and published in English in 1853.

“We Three Kings of Orient Are” was written for a New York Christmas pageant in 1857.

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” was composed in its present form in 1868.

The first English translation of “Silent Night” (composed in 1818 by the Austrians Franz Xaver Gruber and Joseph Mohr) was in 1871 where it was published in a Methodist hymnal.

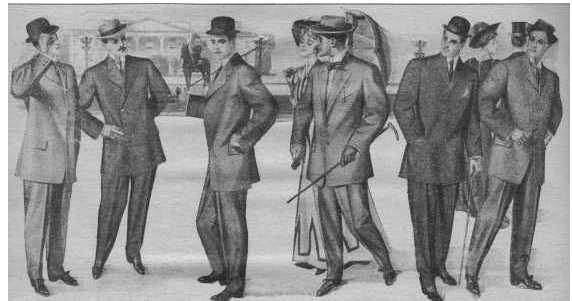
“Away in a Manger” was originally published in an 1885 Lutheran Sunday School book by James R. Murray. However, who penned down the first two verses is still a mystery. The third verse “Be near me...” was added in 1904 by Dr. John McFarland of New York City.



## In Men’s Fashion Everything Old is New Again

At least that is what the November 12, 2009 *New York Times* had to say about current trends in men’s fashion. According to their report there is a “steady infiltration of 19<sup>th</sup>-century haberdashery into the 21<sup>st</sup>-century wardrobe. Garment after garment has arrived on the scene that one might think more Gilbert and Sullivan than Bergdorf and Goodman...” They further state that “many of today’s popular men’s styles have their roots in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century”...including “the three-piece suits once favored by mustachioed Gilded Age banker; the military greatcoats and boots of the Union officers; and the Henley undershirts, suspenders, plaid flannel shirts, and stout drill trousers worn by plain, honest farmers.” Apparently men’s hats are also back in style, too. New York hatter Rod Keenan reported that he has been selling bowlers, derbies, and even a handful of top hats. And what are some of the other components of this old-new fashion trend? Well, men can expect to see high-button, high lapel vests, tweed trousers and knickers (or breeches as some may call them today), tailcoats, capes, cotton shirts, etc.

For you Victorian Society men, this will be a great time to augment your wardrobe so be on the lookout at local stores for fashions that reflect these latest trends. And, ladies, if men’s fashion is going Victorian, can this same trend be far behind for us?



And, that’s not all...apparently the hip set in New York also favors Victorian design in their homes “where curio cases, taxidermy and other stylish clutter of the Victorian era have been taken up...” Victorian-era hobbies have also become quite fashionable including wet-plate photography, black-powder shooting and hunting, skeet shoots, and leisure bicycling.

This brings us to a new Victorian-style hobby called “Tweed Rides” which began earlier this year in London and has now spread to Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, and even, Washington, DC (the first Tweed Ride in DC was held on November 15). Tweed Rides are gatherings of “spiffily dressed ladies and gents cycling leisurely through town and disdaining finish lines” and participants can “Leave the fleece, Lycra, and outer shell at home. This ride is for the dandy.”

I'd say that the Victorian era is definitely back in vogue.



VSFC President Mack Gross (left) is, of course, appropriately attired for Washington, DC's first ever Tweed Ride

### John Philip Sousa's Birthday Party Contributed by Ron Anzalone

What would you expect to have at John Philip Sousa's birthday celebration? Music, courtesy of the U.S. Marine Band, plenty of Sousa relatives, and a cake. As for presents, the main "presence" was Mr. Sousa himself (aka yours truly, VSFC member Ron Anzalone). John Philip Sousa turned 155 on November 6, 2009, and as it does every year the Congressional Cemetery organized an event at the Sousa graveside. The difference this year was that Mr. Sousa was present. Honored guests included His Excellency Joao de Vallera, Portuguese Ambassador to the United States (Sousa's father John Antonio was Portuguese); 9 descendants (great to great great great great nieces and nephews); and Congressman and Mrs. James Obstar who were recognized for their support of the cemetery's preservation. Chairman Patrick Crowley of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery served as MC, and John Philip Sousa delivered remarks to the audience of about 150 attendees. Following several awards to supporting partners, including volunteers, Mr. Sousa introduced the U.S. Marine Band which played *Semper Fidelis*, *The Thunderer*, *Stars and Stripes Forever*, and *the Star Spangled Banner*, with Assistant Director Major Jason Fettig offering additional commentary on Sousa's career and music. Afterward everyone had cake and Mr. Sousa posed with the Marine leaders, the memorial wreath, and with the Sousa charity raffle quilt made by members of Christ Church on Capitol Hill (which oversees the cemetery, and is located two doors from Sousa's birthplace). We were glad to see VSFC members Frank D'Aquila and Sigrid and Ric Terman in attendance.



Following the event, the Congressional Cemetery dog walkers were back in force on what turned out to be a beautiful day.

As Mr. Sousa himself observed: "I have enjoyed making music and bringing music to the people, music that everyone wants to hear and that everyone can enjoy. But I have also enjoyed my leisure pursuits--trapshooting, horseback riding, baseball, a good cigar. As I have often observed, 'A horse, a dog, a gun, a girl, and music on the side. That is my idea of heaven.' "

I couldn't have said it better myself! Wait a minute--I think I did!

### *A Note from the Ball Chair –* *Terry Hooper*

On Sunday, October 11, the Victorian Society hosted the Crescent City Ball at the Army Navy Country Club, which we were able to use again thanks to member Beverly Stevenson, who very graciously agreed to sponsor us this year. The people of New Orleans have a saying *Laissez Les Bon Temps Roulez - Let the Good Times Roll!* and we certainly did! The Ball was attended by 68 people, making it almost a sell-out, and one of our most successful to date. The festivities began at 6:00 with a cocktail hour where guests were invited to peruse the wonderful selection of tempting silent auction items arranged by the silent auction co-chairs, Maryll Kleibrink and Karla Pringle. The silent auction earned \$900 and was the most successful that we have ever had, and I would like to thank Maryll and Karla for the great job they did, and also to extend a special thank you from the Board to Maryll who is resigning from her position as silent auction chair after many years of acting in this capacity for us. Maryll has always done a fantastic job of fundraising for the society, and she will be greatly missed. After viewing the silent auction offerings, guests could then purchase beverage tickets being sold by dashing veteran ticket seller Connor Grubbs, who was assisted this year by two lovely ball newcomers, Megan Fenn and Gabrielle



Grubbs. And what would the ball be without a chance to be photographed? This year we had another festive



photo op where guests could pose as the King and Queen of Mardi Gras. The photo op and the table centerpieces were designed once again by Ball decorating committee members Linda Lau and Anne Willis. And, as is our tradition, every guest received a party favor. In keeping with our theme, this year's favor was a scrumptious pecan praline made by Gus Knapp, who also was up until 2:00 a.m.

preparing the King Cake that was passed around at intermission. Also at intermission was a "sing along" led by Ron Anzalone. About a week before the ball, I sent Ron an email asking if he could sing the official song of Mardi Gras for us. It's a very obscure song called "If Ever I Cease to Love You", but Ron managed to get the lyrics and did a fabulous job leading us in both that song and the more well-known "When the Saints Go Marching In". Of course, you can't have a ball without dance cards, musicians, and a dance master.

The beautiful dance cards were provided by Linda Lau (and thanks to all of the guests who returned their dance pencils!). The music was provided again this year by the very talented Marty Taylor



on concertina and Steve Hickman on violin. And what can I say about our Dance Master Corky Palmer? Who else has the fortitude to lead our group, most of who dance only once a year, through our repertoire of dances? As usual, Corky did a great job this year, and I can attest, it wasn't easy, but it was fun! As you can see, it takes the efforts of many people to pull together the ball, and I would like to thank everyone who contributed once again for making the Crescent City Ball a great success.

**And don't forget to mark you 2010 calendar on Sunday, October 17<sup>th</sup> for our next ball – "The Witching Hour" as we celebrate Halloween Victorian style!**



## *Of Special Interest*

If you enjoyed our ball and can't wait until next October, Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria is hosting a Civil War Ball on Saturday, January 23, 2010, from 8 – 11:00 p.m. This elegant, Victorian era ball will feature the waltz, Virginia Reel, and more led by dance master Corky Palmer. Live music, desserts and a cash bar round out the evening. Period attire (military or civilian) or after five wear encouraged. The cost is \$45/person (in advance) or \$50 at the door. Go to [www.gadsbystavern.org](http://www.gadsbystavern.org) to purchase tickets.

And, if you want to take dance classes, they are sponsoring Civil War dance classes on January 7, 14, and 21 from 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. The cost is \$12 each or \$30 for the series.

## Welcome New Members

**Charles Aldrich and Cathleen Zaret**, 11903 Whistler Court, Potomac, MD 20854, 301-294-0270

**Elizabeth Gara**, 4327 Ravensworth Road, Apt. 624, Annandale, VA 22003, 703-642-5578

**Irene Nasar**, 10 Rice Street, Berryville, VA 22611, 540-955-0327

**Tom Ballew**, 11110 La Mesa Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030, 703-602-1347

**Alexandra Maller**, 308 Walnut Street, Falls Church, VA 22046, 703-237-0106

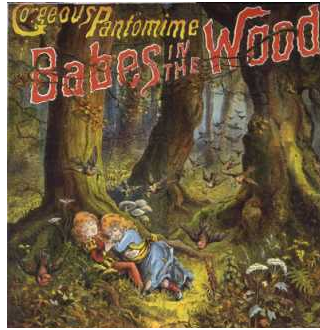
**Address Change for Richard and Mary Lou Ziller:**  
19912 Mizner Terrace, Ashburn, VA 20147

## And Lastly, From Our Foreign Correspondent Panto A Brief History of Pantomime

I'm not sure how many of you will have heard of pantomime let alone know what it is. It's a peculiarly British theatrical tradition that has never caught on in the United States, where it had equally dramatic successes and failures in the 19th century. But as the Holiday season now approaches and because that's when theatres all over Britain, professional as well as amateur, all stop what they're doing and put on pantomimes, I thought I'd introduce the subject for the Christmas Victoria's Messenger. Right now *Jack and the Bean Stalk*, *Cinderella*, *Aladdin* and *Snow White* are appearing as titles of shows all over the British Isles. Families crowd together in theatres and church halls "going to the Pantomime," either just before Christmas or just after.

Pantomime today is a show predominantly aimed at children, based on a popular fairy tale or folk legend, the most popular subjects being *Cinderella*, followed by *Aladdin*, *Dick Whittington* and *Snow White*. Other popular titles are *Jack & the Beanstalk*, *Babes in the Wood*, (usually combining the legend of Robin Hood) and *Sleeping Beauty*.

There are specific attributes that make a pantomime. Without them it would not be recognised as a pantomime. Among these are: the part of the "Principal Boy" played by a woman, usually a young, attractive actress; the



1886 Poster

Pantomime Dame played by a man, usually an old and not attractive actor; a scene in which a character or characters, usually evil or mischievous, appear behind the back of the Dame, who feigns not to see them. "Have you seen any nasty looking creature around here boys and girls?" asks the Dame of the audience, to which the largely juvenile audience cries out: "Behind you!!!" On the Dame's looking round the creatures run round behind the Dame. As (s)he turns back to the audience the creatures move behind again. "Oh no there isn't!" cries the Dame. "Oh yes there is!" choruses the audience, this voluble exchange going on for several choruses until the Dame feigns discovery of the creatures. Without that interplay at least once in a pantomime, it isn't a pantomime. There is also always the evil menacing badee, who, from the moment he steps on the stage, at the very outset and from stage right by long tradition, is booed and hissed by the audience, a welcome repeated at his every appearance and disappearance throughout the pantomime. This frequently results in one or two very small children bursting into tears and being carried out by a parent to calm them down. The Good Fairy likewise is another essential part, who ensures that the hero (a lady actor) and his (i.e her) dimwit companion (usually a young male actor and clown) comes through victorious in the end. Mix this little lot up with a fairy tale and you've as good as got yourself a pantomime.

So the word "Pantomime" today means a form of entertainment, generally performed during the Christmas season with families as the target audience. But pantomime is not a modern phenomenon. The origins of British Pantomime, or "Panto" as it is known, date back to the middle ages, taking on board the traditions of the Italian Commedia dell' Arte, the Italian Night Scenes and British Music hall to produce an intrinsic art form that has constantly adapted to survive up to the present day. The term "pantomime" derives (according to the

Encyclopaedia of Pantomime q.v.) from a Greek term which translates as "we can act everything". It was employed by the Romans (pantomimus) from the 1st to the 5th centuries to refer to popular, often bawdy, solo comic entertainment (a hint here of the stand-up comic of a thousand years later). There seems then to have been a gap – the Dark Ages? – until the 14th to 16th centuries when the Renaissance re-awakened interest in Roman and Greek theatre. About this time in England cross-dressing was a standard habit of the English theatre, where men and boys played all the parts, male and female, in any play, whether a drama, a comedy or a burlesque.

Pantomime has been attempted abroad, usually with a small amount of success. In America this very British art form has fared less favourably. In 1831 a production of "Mother Goose" toured New York, but the audiences did not understand the play and it flopped. In 1868; however, an impresario, George L. Fox took a production of *Humpty Dumpty* to the Olympic Theatre, New York, where it ran for over 1,200 performances, making it the most successful Pantomime in American history. But since then it seems Pantomime has remained a little known theatre form in the U.S. Not surprisingly it has proved popular in ex-British colonies such as Canada, Australia and South Africa. In 2001 a production of *Babes in the Wood* ran at the Rainbow Seven Arts Theatre in Harare, Zimbabwe! There was always Pantomime in Zimbabwe when I was growing up there, put on by enthusiastic amateurs. My mother took me along and introduced me to the art form.

During its long existence Pantomime has had famous panto impresarios, such as Augustus Harris, "Father of modern Pantomime" at the Drury Lane Theatre in the 1870's. Harris,

appointed manager of Drury Lane in 1879, introduced the first stars of the popular Music Hall into pantomime, and created the lavish productions that popularised the



genre, forcing managements not just in London, but around the country, to ensure that every town had at least one, if not two Pantomimes running every Christmas season. Pantomime became extremely popular in Victorian Britain during the 1870s. By now performances would last up to 3 hours and they began to appeal to juvenile audiences as well as adults. When Augustus Harris took over management of Drury Lane he began staging extraordinarily sumptuous pantomimes. He made the pantomime the sole evening's

entertainment, the Harlequinade being eliminated (Harlequinades were a series of innovative performances combining scenes from classical mythology or folklore with silent scenes depicting the comic adventures of Harlequin and Columbine). Harris replaced Harlequin with the rapidly developing Music Hall performers, receiving criticism for “vulgarising pantomime” when he first introduced them in 1879.

The most celebrated of all performers to play the role of The Dame was Dan Leno; in 1886 he appeared for the first time in a Pantomime role of The Dame in Jack and the Beanstalk. Born in London in 1860, Leno brought to the part not just his comic genius and inventiveness, but great warmth and sympathy. By the 1880's Leno had become one of the most popular entertainers on the halls. His speciality was the monologue and comic songs, and his characters were as diverse as the recruiting sergeant, a shopwalker, and 'Mrs Kelly', forerunner of his Dame career to follow. After seeing him in music hall, the pantomime producer George Conquest signed him to appear as Dame Durden in Jack and the Beanstalk at the Surrey Theatre, London in 1886. The following year Augustus Harris booked him to appear at Drury Lane, where he was to remain for the next sixteen years as star of Pantomime. It was at Drury Lane that the role of 'Mother Goose' was created for him, in which he effectively created the modern pantomime dame. His entrance in bun-wig, shawl and button boots was to influence every pantomime dame that followed him. He arrived on stage sitting on a cart, pulled by two donkeys. On board was a crate of live geese. In true topical form a modern motor car runs into his cart, upsetting geese, dame and donkeys. The entrance was completed by Leno catching the geese whilst berating the driver in French, German, Italian and English.



Appearing with Leno during those years were Marie Lloyd, Little Tich and Herbert Campbell. Augustus Harris died in 1886, but Arthur Collins stepped into the breach at Drury Lane and continued where Harris had left off even more successfully. Covent Garden meanwhile gave up competing, staging its last annual pantomime in 1887. Collins 1900 panto, written by J. Hickory Woods, set the style for pantomimes for the future. Though Leno and his fellow actor/Music Hall artiste Herbert Campbell both died in 1904, Collins made other pantomime stars of Harry Randall, George Graves and Wilkie Bord. For a while (1912 – 1915) Collins experimented with reverting to having male actors take on the part of Principal Boy, but it was not a success. By 1920 Drury Lane dropped Pantomime from

its repertoire for the first time in 70 years, as did the Lyceum in 1939 when Frederick Melville died. Francis Laidler took on the mantle "King of Pantomimes" in the 1930's, producing shows at the Alhambra Theatre, Bradford, which were then presented all over the country.

Pantomime has combined many elements of theatre throughout its long history, and by adapting it has survived. The element of "novelty" has always been to the forefront, as has its ability to encompass modern trends and topicality, within its structured framework. People talk about "traditional" pantomime, but to remain popular this form of theatre has had to keep its eye firmly on modern trends, and by weaving these into its format, remains one of the most popular forms of entertainment in this country.

On December 8th the Cambridge Arts Theatre will open with *Dick Whittington* as its pantomime for this season. Your reporter will spend a few evenings and the occasional afternoon, between then and the end of January, selling ice creams and glowing wands and the occasional glass of beer or wine to the crowds that will pour into the Theatre, mums, dads, grandmums and granddads, all brining with them huge trails of children of every age. By the time panto has ended at the end of January the Theatre will expect to be able to pay its bills for the next year. Without panto, it would go bust, as would a great many other theatres in Britain. And whilst that professional panto is playing in the Arts Theatre your trusty reporter will also be rehearsing for a pantomime being put on by his Buddhist work colleagues at the end of January in the Cambridge Buddhist Centre. Even Buddhists have pantomime! But they will perform in a wonderful old Victorian Theatre (now the Buddhist Centre), one of only 2 of their kind in Britain (the other being across the fens at Bury St. Edmonds).

Merry Christmas one and all, and all the very best in the New Year - *Frank (Ross)*

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### The Victorian Society at Falls Church

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