

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Imagine for a moment that you were born in Boston in 1760—and that you lived until the ripe old age of ninety, to the year 1850 (which coincidentally happens to be the span of this volume). Imagine, if you can, all of the dramatic, world-changing events you would have been witness to.

As a child, you would have become vaguely aware that the grown-ups around you were muttering such words as “taxes,” “liberty,” and “independence.” Your awareness would begin to grow that the country you lived in was ruled by a king and a Parliament thousands of miles away, and you would have seen English ships in the harbor and soldiers in red coats patrolling the streets of the city. As you grew into your teen years, your awareness would continue to grow. You would hear about an event called the “Boston Tea Party,” and adults would be talking about revolution and the prospect of war with Great Britain. In your mid-teens that war would actually begin, with shots fired at the villages of Lexington and Concord in your home state.

As your awareness of events around you continues to grow, you learn that your country has taken the bold step of declaring its independence from Great Britain. You would hear or read the names of those who created a new country—your country—out of the separate colonies of North America: names such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, and from your home state, John Adams and his cousin Samuel Adams. These men along with fifty others could have been hanged for treason for opposing their British overlords, but had the courage to assert the independence of a new nation by putting their names to the Declaration of Independence. And by this time, in 1776, you would have been old enough to join the army fighting for that independence. If you had joined the army, you very well could have taken part in historic battles up and down the thirteen colonies, culminating with the Siege of Yorktown in Virginia and the surrender of the British army. The struggle was by no means an easy one, and American forces suffered devastating

setbacks. But they won victories as well, and by 1781—with you in your twenties—the tide began to turn.

The war ended. The founders of the country struggled with trying to make it work. The colonies joined together under a document called the Articles of Confederation, but the “confederation” was too loose, too weak, and the country was running into difficulties because of a lack of a strong central government. They decided that a new plan of government—a new Constitution—was needed, so they met one hot summer in Philadelphia to create that plan of government, and perhaps by now you were taking part in the debate in Massachusetts over whether to approve—or to “ratify”—the document. The document, which would survive for more than two centuries, is ultimately ratified, and most of your countrymen were pleased that attached to it is a “Bill of Rights” that ensures rights as an individual are protected—or at least tries to.

You would now be almost thirty years old, and George Washington, the leader of the troops during the Revolutionary War, becomes the president of the nation. The nation starts to grow, both in population and in geographic area, with new states, with names such as Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, being added to the Union. And in one bold stroke, President Thomas Jefferson *doubles* the size of the United States of America with the Louisiana Purchase—and sends men west to explore the vast continent that stretches all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. In the years that follow, the new nation establishes a number of “territories” that will eventually join Massachusetts and the other colonies as states—territories with names such as Indiana, Illinois, Mississippi, and others—and farther west, in lands that a child in Massachusetts could only have imagined, territories with names like Oregon, Dakota, and Montana. As you age, you would learn that the immense republic of Texas was added to the Union and that, by 1850, the Union would consist of thirty-one states. You could not know it at the time, but your grandchildren would likely be witness to

the growth of the United States to an astonishing forty-eight states.

In 1812, war broke out with Great Britain over a number of unresolved issues. Americans had to take up arms again. That war had one lasting outcome, for out of that war, and specifically out of the British bombardment of Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore, came a poem by a lawyer and amateur poet, Francis Scott Key. That poem, and its musical accompaniment, was called "The Star-Spangled Banner," and it would become the national anthem of the United States, played as part of a wide range of public occasions. The war, specifically the Battle of Lake Erie, also added two expressions to American lore, both from naval commander Oliver Hazard Perry: "Don't give up the ship" and "We have met the enemy, and they are ours."

War erupted again in 1846 between the United States and Mexico. Mexico was not happy with the American takeover of Texas, which had achieved independence in the Texas Revolution of 1835–1836—a series of events that included the Battle of the Alamo. That battle survives in American lore as the encounter in which frontiersman Davy Crockett was killed, and which gave birth to the phrase "Remember the Alamo!" Ultimately, American forces prevailed, and a major outcome of the war was American acquisition of much of what is today the American Southwest, including Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California—or portions of these states. The phrase "Manifest Destiny" was used by the public and in the press to express the notion that it was the clear ("manifest") destiny of the United States to stretch the entire length of the continent to the Pacific Ocean. During these years, a distinctly American culture began to emerge, one that was not simply a reflection of the nation's British roots. If you were a reader, you would become familiar with the work of such authors as James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The members of the Transcendental Club in your home state were achieving popularity. The Smithsonian Institution was founded and would go on to become one of the world's premier institutions for the preservation of historical artifacts.

Not everything was rosy, however. During your forties and beyond, you very well could have taken part in the debate over slavery. Although the slave *trade* ended in 1808, slavery as an institution would survive until your grandchildren took part in a civil war fought in large part to end the terrible practice. During your adulthood, you would have been witness to, or have learned about, slave revolts and various political compromises reached in an effort to keep states where slave ownership was prevalent from leaving Union. And while you would have learned about the horrors of slavery from various publications, you would also have learned about the "Underground Railroad," which helped escaped slaves achieve their freedom; or the formation of such organizations as the American Anti-Slavery Society; or the publications of such foes of slavery such as Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimké, William Lloyd Garrison, and Frederick Douglass. In your final days, you perhaps would have been dismayed by the "Compromise of 1850" and the Fugitive Slave Act, and distraught that the nation you had seen grow and thrive could be driven apart by such an issue. The feminist movement also took root in 1848 with the women's convention at Seneca Falls, New York—a movement that would ultimately result in the right of women to vote, and to take their rightful place alongside men in the world's affairs.

Things did not go much better for Native Americans than they did for slaves. As European settlers spread and were hungry for land, a number of wars with native tribes were fought: the Chickamauga Wars, the Seminole Wars, the Black Hawk War, and the Apache Wars, among others. Treaties were broken, and Native Americans were herded onto reservations—a process that would continue through the rest of the nineteenth century. One of the worst stains on American history, along with slavery, was the Indian Removal Act, which drove eastern Indian tribes to "Indian Territory" in the modern-day state of Oklahoma. The "Trail of Tears" the Indians followed on their trek resulted in thousands of deaths.

Politics were on the mind of many Americans, perhaps you as well, during the early decades of the new nation. Although the Revolutionary War ended, tensions with Great Britain continued to simmer. So too,

did tensions with France—America's ally during the revolution but a nation that was becoming an adversary by the time you reached the age of forty. Political parties were beginning to emerge, with oftentimes bitter disputes. The debate between the parties bore on the question of the power and authority of the federal government, with the Federalists, as the name implies, advocating a strong central government, while the party of Thomas Jefferson advocated a more localized, agrarian government. Parties would divide over the issue of slavery, with the formation of the Free Soil Party and of the Republican Party, which stood in staunch opposition to slavery.

Your descendants, more than a century and a half later, look back on these many incidents and developments and spot three major themes: independence,

growth, and division. Examined with sympathy and understanding, these events are viewed as having played a major role in forging a distinctly American culture and identity. Not everything that our ancestors did was right, or defensible, but when some took the mistaken path, others were at hand to offer necessary correctives. The next chapter in American history would be a difficult one, dominated as it would be by the Civil War, Jim Crow laws, racial discrimination, worker oppression, and the outbreak of world war. But the chapter that preceded it—which is the topic of this volume—gave rise to a nation, the “New World,” that at least tried to be the “shining light on a hill” that it aspired to be.

—*Michael J. O'Neal, PhD*

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Battle of Lexington and Concord

The American Revolution began with the Battle of Lexington and Concord, in which the British seriously misjudged the resistance of the American colonists.

Date: April 19, 1775

Locale: Lexington, Massachusetts; Concord, Massachusetts

KEY FIGURES

Thomas Gage

John Parker

John Pitcairn

Paul Revere

Francis Smith

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

A deadly skirmish between American militiamen in Lexington, Massachusetts, and British troops on their way to seize guns and ammunition stored in Concord marked the start of the American Revolution. An enduring question remains, however: Who fired the first shot? In the following eyewitness account by the Reverend Jonas Clark, a local pastor, it was the British who fired first.

Immediately upon their [the British troops] appearing so suddenly and so nigh, Capt. Parker, who commanded the militia company, ordered the men to disperse and take care of themselves,

and not to fire. Upon this, our men dispersed—but many of them not so speedily as they might have done, not having the most distant idea of such brutal barbarity and more than savage cruelty from the troops of a British king, as they immediately experienced!...

Eight [militiamen] were left dead upon the ground! Ten were wounded. The rest of the company, through divine goodness, were (to a miracle) preserved unhurt in this murderous action!

In the early morning hours of April 19, 1775, Captain John Parker, forty-five-year-old veteran of the French and Indian War, stood with his single company of Minutemen on the village green at Lexington, Massachusetts. Several hours had passed since Paul Revere's word of an approaching column of redcoats had brought them tumbling out of their beds. Revere had been unsure as to how General Thomas Gage would lead his men, quartered in Boston, toward Lexington. The land route across the isthmus to the mainland was long and more obvious; the Charles River was not frozen, and the river route was shorter. A signal from the steeple of Christ's Church provided the answer; the British were coming by sea.

Soon a messenger reported that the royal troops were almost within sight. Earlier, the Minutemen and their neighbors had adopted a resolution that

the presence of a British army in their province constituted an infringement upon their “natural, constitutional, chartered rights.” They had pledged their “estates and every thing dear in life, yea and life itself” if necessary in opposing the Coercive Acts of 1774. The British were correct in their suspicions that the Americans had hidden arms; gunpowder and shot had been stored all winter for such a moment as this.

The seventy-seven men who answered Parker’s call, including sixteen-year-old drummer William Diamond, were hopelessly outnumbered by the ap-

proaching British. Many were old for such work; fifty-five were more than thirty years of age. Most of the town’s men hoped not to provoke the British. Parker kept his men on the green and away from the nearby road the British would follow to the next town of Concord. The captain of the Minutemen intended their presence to serve only a symbolic purpose, an expression of their displeasure at the redcoats’ intrusion. British major John Pitcairn nevertheless led his advance companies onto the green. As the British approached, Pitcairn ordered his men to hold their fire. He told the Minutemen to



A mostly accurate hand-colored map depicting the 1775 Battles of Lexington and Concord and the Siege of Boston. By J. DeCosta, July 29, 1775. Image from the Library of Congress American Memory, via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]

Lord Dunmore's Proclamation

A document issued by John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, identifying the Patriot rebels of Virginia as traitors to the Crown and that declared that slaves who would join his forces would be free.

Date: November 7, 1775

Locale: On board the Ship *William*, off Norfolk, Virginia

KEY FIGURES

John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore

SUMMARY OF EVENT

On November 7, 1775, John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, who had been royal governor of the colony of Virginia since 1771, drafted a document. This Proclamation, published on November 14, named the Patriot rebels of Virginia as traitors to the Crown, declared martial law in Virginia, and—the part that elicited the greatest response and had the widest impact—declared as free any slaves or indentured servants who would join Dunmore's forces against the rebels. Many slaves ran away from their masters to join the British because of their offer of freedom, and the Virginians did whatever they could to prevent it.

The results of this Proclamation were not as dramatic as Dunmore had hoped, as harassment, disease, and a decisive defeat all worked against him and his vision for an army supplemented heavily with African American troops. However, the Proclamation deserves to be remembered as the first mass emancipation of slaves in America. The number of slaves escaping their masters during the American Revolution, in large part because of this Proclamation, would also be the greatest number to escape slavery until the Civil War.

Africans who arrived in the colony, starting in 1619, were not originally slaves. Most of them

worked as servants, with the same rights, duties, and treatment as indentured servants. Like indentured servants, these Africans worked for a master a certain number of years, after which they could be released and were free to buy land. Black men could even have white servants and testify in court against white people.

Before long, however, white Virginians began to draw a more distinct line—in life and in law—between themselves and black Africans. By 1662, Vir-



Portrait of John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, (1765), oil-on-canvas by Joshua Reynolds. Image via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]

Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence announced the beginning of the United States of America to Great Britain and the world, justifying the colonies' decision to secede from Britain and setting forth the political philosophy of the new republic. The Declaration of Independence is remarkable for being at once a work of theoretical political philosophy and an eminently practical document that announced and brought about the independence of the American colonies from Great Britain.

Date: July 4, 1776

Locale: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

KEY FIGURES

John Adams

Benjamin Franklin

Thomas Jefferson

Richard Henry Lee

Thomas Paine

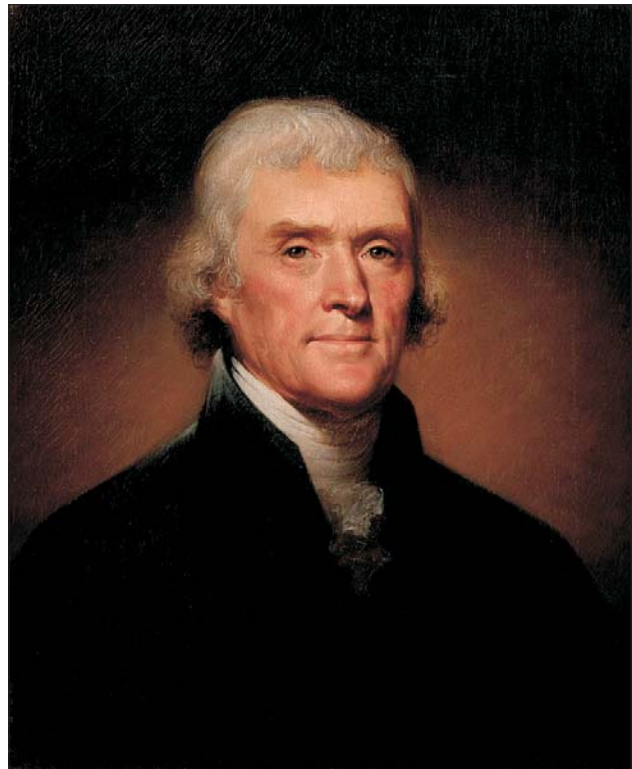
SUMMARY OF EVENT

The Declaration of Independence was the culmination of a gradual, ten-year shift by the colonies from active participants in the British Empire to rebellious advocates of a total break with the mother country. This decade of accelerating estrangement was fueled by fundamental disagreements over the Proclamation of 1763, the Sugar Act and Currency Act (1764), the Stamp Act and Quartering Act (1765), the 1766 Declaratory Act, and the 1767 Townshend Revenue Act, as well as the Boston Massacre (1770), the Tea Act and Boston Tea Party (1773), the 1774 Coercive Acts, and the 1775 Battle of Lexington and Concord.

In the opening months of 1776, the colonists faced a momentous decision. Should they content themselves with a return of British authority as it existed prior to 1763, or should they irrevocably sever all political ties with and dependence upon Great

Britain? Since Great Britain was unwilling to give them that choice, offering instead only abject surrender to parliamentary sovereignty, Americans in increasing numbers concluded that complete independence, not merely autonomy within the British Empire, must be their goal.

Many of the undecided colonists were won over to defiance of the Crown as a result of Parliament's Prohibitory Act, which called for a naval blockade of the colonies, the seizure of American goods on the high seas, and the dragooning of captured provincial seamen into the Royal Navy. For many colonists, news of the British ministry's decision to employ German mercenaries for use in America was the last straw. The requirements of the struggle itself lent weight to the idea of complete separation. People



Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration, largely wrote the first draft of the Declaration in isolation between June 11, 1776, and June 28, 1776, from the second floor of a three-story home he was renting at 700 Market Street in Philadelphia. Image via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]



John Trumbull's 1819 painting, *Declaration of Independence*, depicting the Committee of Five from the Second Continental Congress presenting the Declaration of Independence to Congress. Image via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]

would not do battle wholeheartedly for vaguely defined purposes, nor would French or Spanish aid, deemed essential to military success, be forthcoming if the colonies fought merely for a greater freedom within the empire.

In January 1776, these colonial issues were the subject of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. Although it may be doubted that Paine's widely read pamphlet was the immediate impetus for the break, and although he advanced no new arguments, Paine expressed cogent and compelling arguments for a free America that would pursue its own destiny. Although Americans of almost every persuasion were already disputing the right of Parliament to rule over the colonies, there remained among the colo-

nists a strong attachment to the British crown and to King George III. Monarchy in general, and the Hanoverian king in particular, received a scathing denunciation from Paine, who asserted that kings were frauds imposed upon people capable of governing themselves. George III, Paine reasoned, was no exception and had engaged in oppressive acts that had destroyed every claim upon American loyalties. Paine held that the break should come immediately, while Americans were in arms and sensitive to their liberties. Independence, he argued, was inevitable for a wealthy, expanding continent that could not long be tied to a small and distant island controlled by "a Royal Brute."

Further Reading

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Defection of Benedict Arnold

In the United States, the name of Benedict Arnold, who sought to surrender West Point to the British during the American Revolutionary War, is now synonymous with treason.

Date: 1779-1780

Locale: West Point, New York

KEY FIGURES

Maj. John André

Gen. John Burgoyne

Gen. Henry Clinton

Gen. Horatio Gates

Gen. Richard Montgomery

SUMMARY OF EVENT

Benedict Arnold was born on January 14, 1741, in Norwich, Connecticut, the son of Benedict Arnold, Sr., and Hannah Waterman King Arnold. He was one of six children, but only he and his sister Hannah survived into adulthood. Business setbacks led to financial struggles for the family, and young Benedict was forced to withdraw from school. He later served as an apprentice in the Norwich apothecary business of family cousins. He also briefly served in the Connecticut army during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). He moved to New Haven, Connecticut, in 1762 and became a druggist and bookseller there. He also acquired some property and became involved in the trading and shipping businesses. He married Margaret Mansfield on February 22, 1767; they had three sons before Margaret died in 1775.



Portrait of Benedict Arnold, c. 1776. Image via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]

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Citizen Genêt Affair (French Neutrality Crisis)

The Citizen Genêt Affair, also known as the French Neutrality Crisis, was a diplomatic issue that arose during the second term of George Washington's presidency. At issue was whether the United States should play any role in France's war with Great Britain and what "neutrality" meant under American laws.

Date: 1793-1794

Locale: Charleston, South Carolina; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

KEY FIGURES

Edmond Charles Genêt
Alexander Hamilton
Thomas Jefferson

SUMMARY OF EVENT

In the 1790s, France was facing a number of domestic crises. The French Revolution had broken out in



Edmond-Charles Genêt, portrait, c. 1810. Image via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]

1789. In the years that followed, King Louis XVI tried to rule under a constitutional monarchy, but his efforts failed. In 1791 he tried to escape France but was captured, put on trial, and executed. France then declared itself a republic. The other European powers, particularly Great Britain and Spain, were fearful that the antimonarchical sentiments sweeping through France would spill over into their nations, so they took up arms against France, although they were repelled by such legendary French generals as the Marquis de Lafayette and General Jean Baptiste Donatien *de* Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau.

In the revolutionaries' efforts to enforce the ideals of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," people began referring to one another with the titles "citizen" and "citizenship." Hence, Edmond Charles Genêt, the

MANIFEST DESTINY

Third Treaty of San Ildefonso

The Third Treaty of San Ildefonso, signed in the context of considerable diplomatic shuffling in Europe, was a secret agreement signed between Spain and the French Republic. Per the agreement, Spain agreed to trade its colony of Louisiana for territories in Tuscany. The 1801 Treaty of Aranjuez confirmed the 1800 treaty. Ultimately, the treaty led to the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.

Date: October 1, 1800

Locale: San Ildefonso, Spain

KEY FIGURES

General Louis-Alexandre Berthier

King Charles IV

Emperor Francis II

Thomas Jefferson

Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord

Mariano Luis de Urquijo

SUMMARY OF EVENT

That the treaty signed in 1800 was the “Third” Treaty of San Ildefonso implies that there were two earlier such treaties. Indeed, the first of the treaties, signed in 1777 between Spain and Portugal, settled territorial disputes in South America. The second such treaty, signed in 1796, formed an alliance between France and Spain against Great Britain in the French Revolutionary wars. What is called the “Third” Treaty of San Ildefonso was in actuality a

draft of an agreement that would be confirmed by later treaties, particularly the 1801 Treaty of Aranjuez. All of this is significant because the web of relationships involving Tuscany, Spain, Great Britain, the United States, and France ultimately led to the 1803 Louisiana Purchase during the administration of President Thomas Jefferson, a territorial acquisition that essentially doubled the size of the United States.

The geopolitical situation of the time was mad-denyingly complex for the modern student of history.



Mariano Luis de Urquijo, Spanish signatory. Image via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]



Charles Talleyrand, long-serving French Foreign Minister; the Treaty was part of a complex web of related agreements. Image via Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain.]

Throughout much of the eighteenth century, France and Spain (both Catholic countries) were allies. After French king Louis XVI was executed, however, Spain joined the allies in the War of the First Coalition (1792-1797) *against* revolutionary France. After Spain was defeated by the French in the War of the Pyrenees (1793), the two nations agreed to the Peace of Basel (1795). Under the terms of the agreement, Spain gave up to France half of Hispaniola (the part that is modern-day Dominican Republic).

Matters became further entangled in 1796 with the Second Treaty of San Ildefonso, by which Spain again allied itself with France in the War of the Second Coalition (1798-1802) and declared war on

Great Britain. The Spanish government at this time was under severe pressure, both economically and politically. Its national debt was rising exponentially. Louisiana, a major part of Spain's North American empire, had been acquired by the terms of the 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Seven Years' War. France ceded the territory to Spain to compensate Spain for Spanish concessions to Britain. Readers should note that "Louisiana" consisted not just of the modern state of Louisiana but a large swath of what would become the central United States all the way north to Montana. The Louisiana territory, however, was a nuisance to Spain because of the cost of preventing American settlers from encroaching on the territory and asserting navigation rights on the Mississippi River. Furthermore, Spain did not want to get into conflict with the United States, for it wished to keep U.S. trading ports open.

Meanwhile, France was having its own set of problems. It lost the lucrative sugar-producing colonies of Haiti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. France wanted them back, which became a key goal of Napoleon and his chief diplomat, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, when Napoleon seized power in 1799. In Napoleon's view, it was essential for France to expand its overseas empire. A step in that direction was a campaign in Egypt, which bolstered French trading interests in the region. Additionally, Talleyrand strove to expand France's holdings in northern Brazil. A third major goal, however, was the restoration of "New France" in North America, which, as noted, France had ceded at the conclusion of the Seven Years' War. The territory was valuable, for it could provide raw materials used by French plantations in the Caribbean.

Accordingly, the situation was that the ambitious France was ascendant under Napoleon, while Spain was relatively weak. Talleyrand was able to convince Spain that French possession of Louisiana would protect Spanish navigation rights on the Mississippi and protect Spanish South America from the

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“A Visit from St. Nicholas” (“Twas the Night Before Christmas)

A traditional Christmas poem that entered into the popular culture, defined the modern conception of Santa Claus, and is still enjoyed by adults and children alike.

Date: 1823

Locale: Troy, New York

KEY FIGURES

Major Henry Beekman Livingston, Jr.
Clement Clarke Moore

SUMMARY OF EVENT

“A Visit from St. Nicholas” was first published on December 23, 1823, in the *Troy Sentinel*, a semi-weekly paper from upstate New York. The author was listed as “Anonymous.” The paper continued to reprint the poem for a number of years, each time listing its author as anonymous.

Eventually, people began to credit Moore with writing the poem. Moore was a wealthy and well-known bishop in the Episcopal Church and a

scholar of the Hebrew language. He taught at the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church and wrote about language. Moore’s most notable scholarly work was the first comprehensive American Hebrew dictionary, published in 1809. He also wrote some poetry, including another poem about St. Nicholas entitled “Old Santeclaus.”

A number of sources throughout history claimed that Moore wrote the poem in 1822 while traveling home to see his family for Christmas. It was said to have been originally intended for the enjoyment of his six children, for whom he recited it on Christmas Eve in 1822. Someone—either a housekeeper or a family friend, depending on the source—reportedly copied the poem and submitted it to the newspaper without Moore’s knowledge.

In 1837, the poem first appeared under Moore’s name when a friend, Charles Fenno Hoffman, attributed it to him in *The New York Book of Poetry*. Seven years later in 1844, Moore included it in an anthology of his own poetry. This was the first time he publically claimed authorship, and he reportedly did so at the insistence of his children.

The children of Livingston played a key role in their father’s claim to the poem as well. Livingston



“A Visit from St. Nicholas” is largely credited with transforming the character into the chubby, jolly persona that is universally recognized as Santa Claus today. Image via iStock/GSA-Printstock. [Used under license.]