

# Washington County, PA 9.12 Project

Volume 2, Issue 12

December 2011



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 OCCUPY this tee-shirt
- 3 Matthew 2 1-12
- 4 5000 Year Leap/ Matt R
- 5 Christmas quotes
- 6 Calendar and an Invitation
- 8 George Washington on Thanksgiving
- 9 Abraham Lincoln on Thanksgiving
- 11 Barrack Obama on Thanksgiving
- 12 a Single Test
- 14 Potemkin Village
- 15 Fish Mob
- 16 Santa Claus , Yes VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus
- 18 the Gift of the Magi
- 22 The Three Kings
- 24 Jesus Loves You

## Notes from the Librarian's Desk

[wpa912library@hotmail.com](mailto:wpa912library@hotmail.com)



"Information is the currency of democracy." - Thomas Jefferson

*Matti Gruzs, Group Librarian*

*Greetings All,  
Thanksgiving is over and Christmas is on the horizon. With all of its glitz and noise it can be a little hard to remember why we even celebrate this day. So in an effort to remind myself why December 25th is the,*

**"BUY EVERYONE YOU KNOW A PRESENT TO SAVE THE ECONOMY DAY"**

*I did a little research on the three guys that started it all...Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar*

*Did they give any thought to the legacy of BLACK FRIDAY, LOCAL BUSSINESS SATURDAY, CYBER MONDAY, or my personal favorite, GREEN TUESDAY they were about to give us when they started this gift giving business? It's doubtful. All they seemed to focus on was following a star in hopes of meeting a Savior.*

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

# OCCUPY!

THE DESPAIR XMAS T-SHIRT IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR PRE-ORDER



FRONT OF SHIRT



BACK OF SHIRT

*occupy*

from the *LATIN*

*occupare*

meaning

*"to Seize"*

My gift to you...  
[www.despair.com](http://www.despair.com)

This TEE-shirt is the latest from  
their very original line of  
Dispairwear :o)

I also recommend their newsletter,  
**The Wailing List**  
It's very imaginative, VERY funny,  
and frequently contains the best  
rambling sales pitch I have ever  
had the pleasure of reading.

ENJOY!



New Testament states that Jesus was brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh shortly after his birth.

gold,

At the time of Jesus' birth gold was usually shaped into coins or symbolic forms. Ancient Persians exported the gold to kings and emperors in Asia and the Middle East.

frankincense,

In the ancient world, frankincense was generally used to make incense. It was used to perfume the homes of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians used frankincense in their religious rituals. It later became a part of Jewish rites, and even later, in the rites of the Catholic Church.

myrrh,

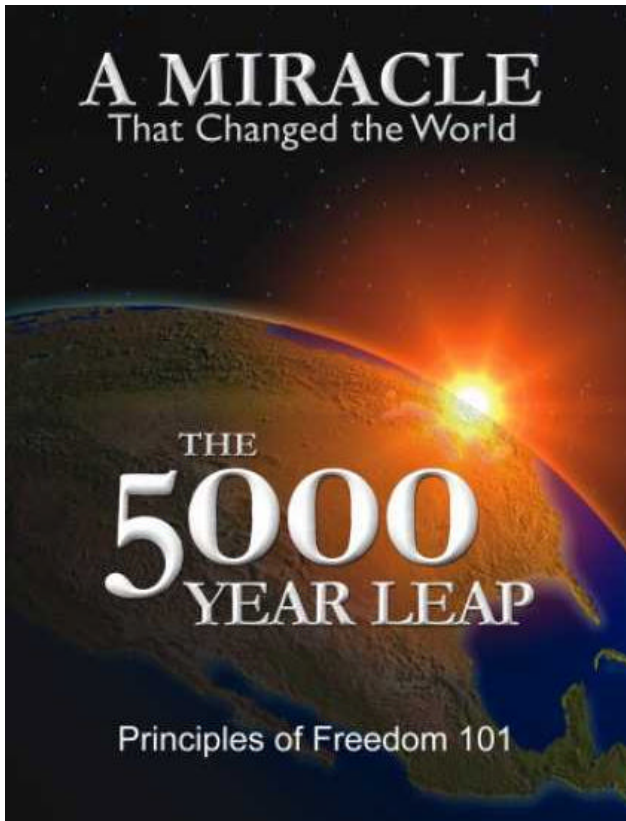
Myrrh was used in many different ways in the ancient world, and was considered sacred by several cultures. The ancient Egyptians used the resin when embalming mummies. It was also an ingredient for incense according to the Old Testament. It has been reported that, in 65 CE, the Roman Emperor Nero burned a year's supply at the funeral of his wife. At times throughout history, myrrh has been at least as valuable as gold, and sometimes even more so, because of its medicinal properties and role in religious ceremonies.



## Three Wise Men

### Matthew 2

<sup>1</sup>Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. <sup>3</sup>When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. <sup>5</sup>And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, <sup>6</sup>And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. <sup>7</sup>Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup>And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. <sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. <sup>11</sup>And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.



## Principles of Liberty

Matt R. has written a summary of each of the 28 principles outlined in the *5000 Year Leap*. I am pleased that he has agreed to let me use them in this and future newsletters. Thank you, Matt.

**Principle 17:** *A system of checks and balances should be adopted to prevent the abuse of power by the different branches of government.*

The sixteenth principle is about how the government should be separated into three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial.

Our current system is good, with people like the President in the Executive branch, senators and such in the Legislative branch, and judges in the Judicial.

"It will not be denied that power is of an encroaching nature and that it ought to be effectually restrained from passing the limits assigned to it." - James Madison

These days, though, we still have this system, but progressives have twisted it to their benefit, such as shoving laws through the judicial branch is only supposed to interpret the law written in the legislative branch and signed by the President.

The three branches of the government are supposed to act independently of one another, which is called a separation of powers. Nowadays, though, the progressives control all three branches, so that the three branches can all be used to push their agenda.



"Reflect on your present blessings  
of which every man has many,  
not on your past misfortunes,  
of which all men have some."

**Charles Dickens**

O Christmas Sun! What holy task is thine!  
To fold a world in the embrace of God!  
~Guy Wetmore Carryl

Christmas is the season for kindling the fire of  
hospitality in the hall, the genial flame of  
charity in the heart. ~Washington Irving

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!  
~Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

There has been only one  
Christmas  
- the rest are anniversaries.

~W.J. Cameron

**This is the message  
of Christmas:  
We are never alone.**

~Taylor Caldwell

He who has not Christmas  
in his heart will never find  
it under a tree. ~Roy L.  
Smith

Wouldn't life be worth the living  
Wouldn't dreams be coming true  
If we kept the Christmas spirit  
All the whole year through?  
~Author Unknown



Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, Love Divine;  
Love was born at Christmas;  
Star and angels gave the sign.  
~Christina Rossetti

Only in souls the Christ is  
brought to birth,  
And there He lives and  
dies. ~Alfred Noyes

Christmas waves a magic  
wand over this world, and  
behold, everything is softer  
and more beautiful.

~Norman Vincent Peale

**Blessed is the season which  
engages the whole world in a  
conspiracy of love!**

~Hamilton Wright Mabie

*When we were children we were  
grateful to those who filled our  
stockings at Christmas time. Why are  
we not grateful to God for filling our  
stockings with legs?*

~G.K. Chesterton

Let Christmas not become a thing  
Merely of merchant's trafficking,  
Of tinsel, bell and holly wreath  
And surface pleasure, but beneath  
The childish glamour, let us find  
Nourishment for soul and mind.

Let us follow kinder ways  
Through our teeming human maze,  
And help the age of peace to come  
From a Dreamer's martyrdom.

~Madeline Morse



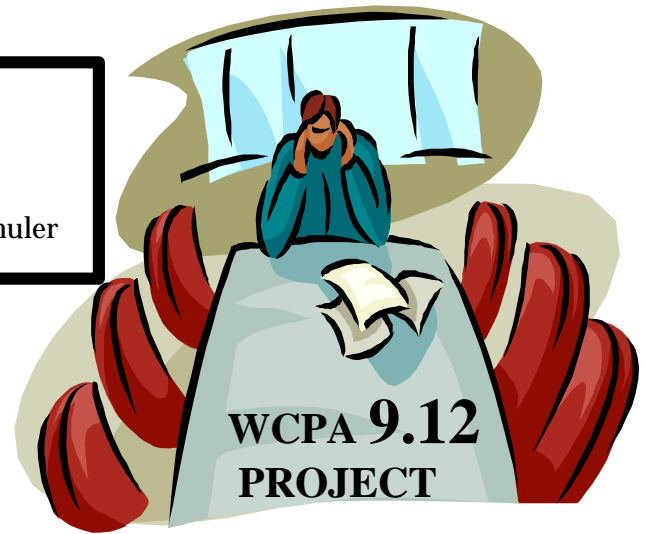
# Calendar of Events



## December 2011

Young Marines  
will be marching in  
Washington City  
Christmas Parade  
December 2nd  
@ 7PM

For the spirit of  
Christmas fulfils the  
greatest hunger of  
mankind. ~Loring A. Schuler



### GROUP MEETINGS

December 8th @ 7PM

Christmas Party on the 22nd

## the Washington County PA 9.12 Project

would like to invite you all  
to join us in a little

### Christmas Fellowship

December 22<sup>nd</sup> @7PM



Go to  
[Washingtonpa912.com](http://Washingtonpa912.com)  
For details

### Washington County PA 9.12 Project

Contact information.

Organizer  
Jeff Foutz  
[jeff15301-912@hotmail.com](mailto:jeff15301-912@hotmail.com)

send stories or letters to the Librarian  
Matti Gruzs  
[wpa912library@hotmail.com](mailto:wpa912library@hotmail.com)

Washington County PA 9.12 Project  
PO Box 325  
Meadow Lands, PA 15347



on **DECEMBER 15TH @ 6:30PM**

there is be a  
**WCRP CHRISTMAS POTLUCK SOCIAL**

at HEADQUARTERS  
75 E. MAIDEN ST. in the City of Washington

**ROAST TURKEY AND BAKED HAM WILL BE SERVED**

**SUGGESTED POTLUCK ITEMS....**

MASHED POTATOES & GRAVY

GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE

CORN

SWEET POTATOE/YAM DISH

ROLLS/ BUTTER

POTATOE SALAD

MACARONI SALAD

SALAD

DESSERTS...PIES/ COOKIES

JELLO SALADS

WATER

WINE

**RSVP: [wcpagop@gmail.com](mailto:wcpagop@gmail.com)**

# Thanksgiving Proclamation

*Issued by President George Washington, at the request of Congress, on October 3, 1789*

By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor; and—Whereas both Houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me “to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness:”

Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favor, able interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted; for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and, in general, for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually; to render our National Government a blessing to all the people by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have shown kindness to us), and to bless them with good governments, peace, and concord; to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us; and, generally, to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

**DEAR GOD,  
I WANNA TAKE A  
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK  
FOR ANYTHING FROM  
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO  
SAY THANK YOU,  
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

Go. Washington

# Thanksgiving In The Civil War

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## A PROCLAMATION

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and provoke their aggressions, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battle-field, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington this third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President:  
WILLIAM H. SEWARD,  
*Secretary of State.*



A CIVIL WAR THANKSGIVING

<http://thehistoricinterior.com/blog/category/civil-war/>

President Barack Obama's Thanksgiving Day proclamation as released by the White House:

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

One of our Nation's oldest and most cherished traditions, Thanksgiving Day brings us closer to our loved ones and invites us to reflect on the blessings that enrich our lives. The observance recalls the celebration of an autumn harvest centuries ago, when the Wampanoag tribe joined the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony to share in the fruits of a bountiful season. The feast honored the Wampanoag for generously extending their knowledge of local game and agriculture to the Pilgrims, and today we renew our gratitude to all American Indians and Alaska Natives. We take this time to remember the ways that the First Americans have enriched our Nation's heritage, from their generosity centuries ago to the everyday contributions they make to all facets of American life. As we come together with friends, family, and neighbors to celebrate, let us set aside our daily concerns and give thanks for the providence bestowed upon us.

*Happy Thanksgiving!*



Though our traditions have evolved, the spirit of grace and humility at the heart of Thanksgiving has persisted through every chapter of our story. When President George Washington proclaimed our country's first Thanksgiving, he praised a generous and knowing God for shepherding our young Republic through its uncertain beginnings. Decades later, President Abraham Lincoln looked to the divine to protect those who had known the worst of civil war, and to restore the Nation "to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union."

In times of adversity and times of plenty, we have lifted our hearts by giving humble thanks for the blessings we have received and for those who bring meaning to our lives. Today, let us offer gratitude to our men and women in uniform for their many sacrifices, and keep in our thoughts the families who save an empty seat at the table for a loved one stationed in harm's way. And as members of our American family make do with less, let us rededicate ourselves to our friends and fellow citizens in need of a helping hand.

As we gather in our communities and in our homes, around the table or near the hearth, we give thanks to each other and to God for the many kindnesses and comforts that grace our lives. Let us pause to recount the simple gifts that sustain us, and resolve to pay them forward in the year to come.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 24, 2011, as a National Day of Thanksgiving. I encourage the people of the United States to come together – whether in our homes, places of worship, community centers, or any place of fellowship for friends and neighbors – to give thanks for all we have received in the past year, to express appreciation to those whose lives enrich our own, and to share our bounty with others.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

Can **a single test**, taken yearly, fairly judge what a child has learned?



Letter grades assigned to our district's schools by a site called PITTSBURGH FUTURE, was the subject of much discussion at my last school board's meeting. Board members were quick to point out only few schools scored higher than some of our schools as they compared the grades 'we' received with surrounding districts. Once I visited the site, I could understand their defensive need to point this out...the sight links school board directors to PSSA scores.

While I think that a standard by which we determine educational success is needed, I don't like the PSSA testing. I think that it adds stress to students and teachers alike.

It overshadows the entire school year and adds nothing to the learning process.

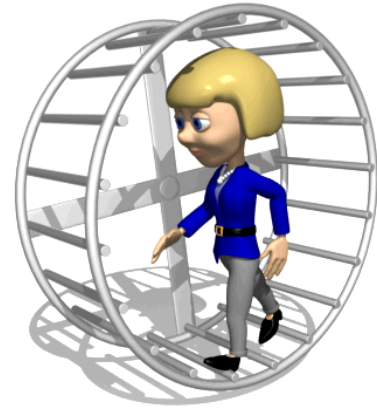
Just a few of the problems I have with this method of measuring achievement:  
\*\*\*it is conducted in the final months of the year, but the results are not made available till the following school year has begun. This starts a cycle that has children, teachers, parents, and administration preparing for the test for months, then when the test is over, waiting months for the results so they can repeat the process again.

\*\*\*it compares 2008's 5th grade to 2009's 5th grade to determine if there has been an improvement. While that may determine the effectiveness of a 5th grade teacher I am not sure how this fairly rates the 5th grade class. If you take into account my first statement, this year's class has arrived without having addressed any issues or unmastered concepts from last year and the pervious year has already moved on to the next grade without addressing any of their problems.

\*\*\*in addition, the bar for success is raised every year. If you play the testing game well and have made improvements in your 5th grade scores from last year's class, you may find the level for proficiency has been raised higher then your improvements and this improved 5th grade class has still failed to archive the now higher score. Almost like the schools are being teased with the chance to make AYP, this would naturally make the schools focus on achieving AYP and not educating our children.

Earlier this year I saw a presentation about a new method of evaluating test scores. It compiled state wide results and compared schools' and previous years' scores. It did this with a ton of gobblety-guck verbiage, many pretty charts, and colorful scatter graphs. Then it introduced a new way to link a child directly to their previous test scores. The last seemed to be the latest way to 'better' help a student to improve their next test scores.

All of this puts everyone involved on a hamster wheel. Everyone is hyper focused on test results. Each year more money and resources are directed toward improving the test scores. Strategy sessions, new programs, and teaching to the test have become the norm. All of this for a test that I for one have never seen. At least when your child takes a history exam they can bring it home and show it to you.



While attending school boards meeting over the last year, I have witnessed several presentations to outstanding teachers as well as, reports from different student organizations on accomplishments that the students, involved in these organizations have made. Many people have come before the board to thank them for providing facilities or supporting a program that allowed for the students to excel in something outside the standard curriculum and sports.

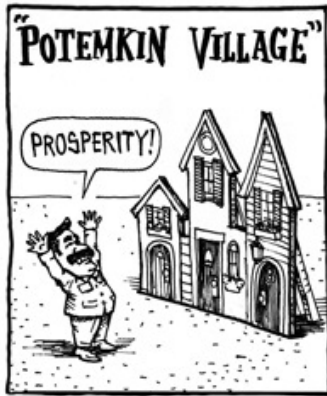
Sadly, when an article about what grade our schools received was referenced, not a one of the school board thought to remind each other or us of these accomplishments.

Sadder still, was their hamster wheel focus on the improvement from last year's test scores and how much faster they were running on their wheel then the surrounding districts.

Because of some unique circumstances, the newly elected school board directors will be the majority. We have chance to get off the wheel and refocus on education.

- \*Stop asking the state or a test to define a successful school district.
- \*Stop looking around to see if a neighboring district is failing so we can feel better about ourselves.
- \*Stop trying to keep up with the Jones, use the resources we have. Attend a few of their meetings, you maybe surprised to find the grass is not always greener.

to see how your school fared go to:  
[www.pittsburghfuture.com/schoolgrades.html](http://www.pittsburghfuture.com/schoolgrades.html).



**Potemkin villages** is an idiom based on a historical myth. According to the myth, there were fake settlements purportedly erected at the direction of Russian minister Grigory Potemkin to fool Empress Catherine II during her visit to Crimea in 1787.

Modern historians are divided on the degree of truth behind Potemkin villages. Potemkin did mount efforts to develop the Crimea and probably directed peasants to spruce up the riverfront in advance of the Empress's arrival, but the tale of elaborate, fake settlements with glowing fires designed to comfort the monarch and her entourage as they surveyed the barren territory at night, is largely fictional.

Potemkin had in fact directed the building of fortresses, ships of the line, and thriving settlements, and the tour – which saw real and significant accomplishments – solidified his power. So, while "Potemkin village" has come to mean, especially in a political context, any hollow or false construct, physical or figurative, meant to hide an undesirable or potentially damaging situation, the phrase may not apply to its original context.

**"Potemkin village"** has also been used to describe the attempts of the government of the Soviet Union to fool foreign visitors. The government would take such visitors, who were often already sympathetic to socialism or Communism, to select villages, factories, schools, stores, or neighborhoods and present them as if they were typical, rather than exceptional. Given the strict limitations on the movement of foreigners in the USSR, it was often impossible for these visitors to see any other examples. A recent BBC series reported that in 1952 Doris Lessing, a British writer who has since won the Nobel Prize for Literature, was part of a delegation visiting the Soviet Union. Her memories of the trip are clear and unforgiving: "I was taken around and shown things as a 'useful idiot'... that's what my role was. I cannot understand why I was so gullible." The Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw and American journalist Walter Duranty also visited the Soviet Union. They mingled with political leaders, were escorted into the countryside by then secret police, and returned home to speak and write of "a land of hope" with "evils retreating before the spread of Communism". However as stories mounted of mass murder and starvation in parts of Russia and Ukraine, reporters such as Gareth Jones and Malcolm Muggeridge investigated and reported on "the creation of one enormous Belsen". Duranty responded with an article in the New York Times headed "Story of the famine is bunk", and got an exclusive interview with Stalin. Duranty was awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

### Examples of Potemkin villages

- The Nazi German Theresienstadt concentration camp, called "the Paradise Ghetto" in World War II, was designed as a concentration camp that could be shown to the Red Cross, but was really a Potemkin village: attractive at first, but deceptive and ultimately lethal, with high death rates from malnutrition and contagious diseases. It ultimately served as a way-station to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Gijeong-dong, built by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) in the north half of the Korean Demilitarized Zone
- In 2010, 22 vacant houses in a blighted part of Cleveland, Ohio were disguised with fake doors and windows painted on the plywood panels used to close them up, so the houses look occupied. A similar program has been undertaken in Chicago.
- Following the Manchurian Incident, and China's referral of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria to the League of Nations in 1931, the League's representative was given a tour of the "truly Manchurian" parts of the region. It was meant to prove that the area was *not* under Japanese domination. Whether the farce succeeded is moot; Japan withdrew from the League the following year.
- In 1982, Mayor Ed Koch of New York City covered the windows of abandoned buildings in the Bronx with decals with plants and Venetian blinds to hide the blight.

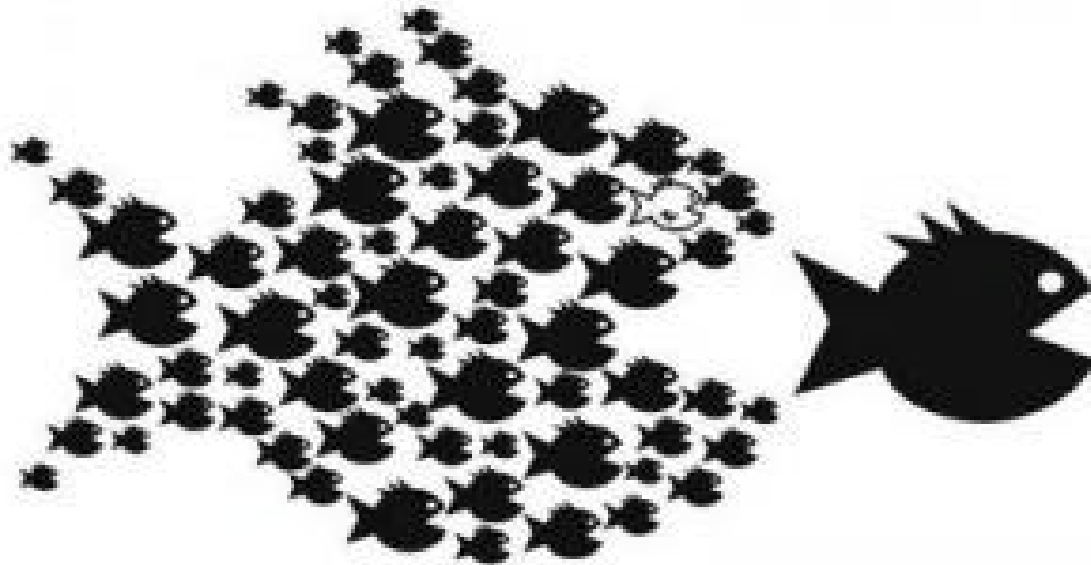
-Wikipedia

When a nation vilifies the productive and makes mascots of the unproductive, it doesn't bode well for its future.

-Walter E. Williams

This perceptive quote is from a column I recently read titled, *Understanding Liberals*. I decided to put it in the Newsletter and started looking for something visual to juxtaposition with it so as to further make his point. I found this in a Blog commenting on an article from the [Financial Times](#).

This cartoon is wrong on so many levels...



# ORGANIZE!

Is this an example of violent rhetoric, mob mentality, or both? How big is too big?

**A few other questions that come to mind:**

1. Who determines how they will divide the big fish?
2. What do the little fish eat when the big fish is gone?
3. Where is the diversity? What does the single white fish represent?
4. When the big fish defends itself, will it use pepper spray?
5. Why is eating the big fish a better idea than learning how to get big yourself?

**Is There a Santa Claus?**

We take pleasure in answering at once and thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of the

"DEAR MOTHER: I am 8 years old.  
"Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus."  
"Papa says 'If you see it in The New York Herald'."  
"Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?"  
"VIRGINIA: C  
"118 WEST NINTH-FIFTH STREET."

VIRGINIA, your little friends are right. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not know except they see. They think that what you call a fairy tale is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect compared with the boundless world of which you are a part. In this great universe of which you are a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect compared with the boundless world of which you are a part, the little childlike faith that there is a Santa Claus is a thing as real and as true as the eternal light which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, VIRGINIA, say, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

[http://cartoons.osu.edu/nast/santa\\_claus.htm](http://cartoons.osu.edu/nast/santa_claus.htm)

Thomas Nast



Coca-Cola

[http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/heritage/cokelore\\_santa.html](http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/heritage/cokelore_santa.html)

Yes VIRGINIA,  
there is a Santa Claus

Clement Charles Moore

cover art by Ruth Sanderson, one of my favorite artist



# Santa Claus

Eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon wrote a letter to the editor of New York's Sun, and the quick response was printed as an unsigned editorial Sept. 21, 1897. The work of veteran newsman Francis Pharcellus Church has since become history's most reprinted newspaper editorial, appearing in part or whole in dozens of languages in books, movies, and other editorials, and on posters and stamps.

"DEAR EDITOR: I am 8 years old.

"Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.

"Papa says, 'If you see it in THE SUN it's so.'

"Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?"

"VIRGINIA O'HANLON.

"115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET."

VIRGINIA, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except [what] they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

<http://www.newseum.org/yesvirginia/>

# THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

by O. Henry

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he

was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Young's in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's

gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor.

She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends--a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say `Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice-- what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

That was then, This is now, WHY?

Los Angeles police are still deciding whether to pursue charges against a woman who allegedly used pepper spray while shopping at a Walmart Thanksgiving night in Porter Ranch, according to a report in the Los Angeles Times.

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."



The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men--who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.



## **The Three Kings**

**Three Kings came riding from far away,  
Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar;  
Three Wise Men out of the East were they,  
And they travelled by night and they slept by day,  
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.**

**The star was so beautiful, large and clear,  
That all the other stars of the sky  
Became a white mist in the atmosphere,  
And by this they knew that the coming was near  
Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy.**

**Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,  
Three caskets of gold with golden keys;  
Their robes were of crimson silk with rows  
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,  
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.**

**And so the Three Kings rode into the West,  
Through the dusk of the night, over hill and dell,  
And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast,  
And sometimes talked, as they paused to rest,  
With the people they met at some wayside well.**

**"Of the child that is born," said Baltasar,  
"Good people, I pray you, tell us the news;  
For we in the East have seen his star,  
And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,  
To find and worship the King of the Jews."**

**And the people answered, "You ask in vain;  
We know of no King but Herod the Great!"  
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,  
As they spurred their horses across the plain,  
Like riders in haste, who cannot wait.**

And when they came to Jerusalem,  
Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,  
Sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;  
And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem,  
And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away; and the star stood still,  
The only one in the grey of morn;  
Yes, it stopped --it stood still of its own free will,  
Right over Bethlehem on the hill,  
The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard,  
Through the silent street, till their horses turned  
And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;  
But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred,  
And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay,  
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,  
The little child in the manger lay,  
The child, that would be king one day  
Of a kingdom not human, but divine.

His mother Mary of Nazareth  
Sat watching beside his place of rest,  
Watching the even flow of his breath,  
For the joy of life and the terror of death  
Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet:  
The gold was their tribute to a King,  
The frankincense, with its odor sweet,  
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete,  
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head,  
And sat as still as a statue of stone,  
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,  
Remembering what the Angel had said  
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,  
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;  
But they went not back to Herod the Great,

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



**Remember:**

**JESUS LOVES YOU THIS MUCH!**

**NOW GO AND ENJOY HIS BIRTHDAY**