



FROM the *St. Paul Globe* greeting, 1888

## Minne GREETINGS for

JUNE DRENN

AMONG THE MANY delightful holiday customs that have vanished is the newsboy's practice of distributing greetings to his customers on New Year's Day. These illustrated pamphlets occupied a unique place in the holiday life of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Minnesota. When the carrier ceremoniously presented the annual greeting published by his newspaper, custom decreed that he be rewarded with a quarter or a dime and cookies or cake. Since carrier boys were paid very little, they counted heavily upon these annual tips to increase their pocket money.

Among the treasures assembled in the course of a century by the Minnesota Historical Society is a small collection of newsboys' greetings or carriers' addresses, as they also were called. The society is eager to add to this group of some thirty-five pamphlets, which are interesting not only as examples of annual news reporting and

as illustrations of contemporary printing techniques and taste, but for a certain folk flavor that may stem from their preparation by amateur poets. Many of them also serve as somewhat biased records of events, reflecting the spirit of the era in which they were published, its optimism or its gloom.

Most of these booklets are illustrated—some with line drawings, lithographs, or cartoons, and others with photographs. The more skillful drawings doubtless were the work of newspaper staff artists; others obviously were produced by amateurs. Cover designs vary from simple type arrangements to elaborately embossed and highly colored pictures and borders. The examples reproduced herewith illustrate the pictorial techniques used in these greetings.

The practice of distributing New Year's addresses seems to have originated in England among journeymen and apprentices who often received small gifts at Christmas from their master's customers. As early as 1666 printed verses were distributed to stimulate holiday generosity. Since newsboys had ready access to writers and printing presses, they eagerly adopted the idea

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FROM THE "Minnesota Historical Society's Treasure Chest" come the New Year's greetings here pictured and quoted. The author is editorial assistant on the society's staff.

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and made it an annual event. As early as 1739 the practice had been transplanted to America, for in that year the carrier of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* trudged along the streets of Philadelphia taking to his customers a New Year's greeting in the form of a poem written by his master, Benjamin Franklin.<sup>1</sup> In the Minnesota country the custom made an early appearance in 1853, when the carriers of the *St. Anthony Express* voiced in doggerel verse their hopes for the future of the little village:

When five thousand souls our streets shall throng;  
And no one doubts but what they will ere long.

In content, Minnesota carriers' addresses may be roughly divided into four categories: booster greetings predicting the future greatness of the region; reviews of national and local events of the year; odes to the old and new year; and carriers' pleas for funds. Many addresses, of course, combine several of these elements.

<sup>1</sup>For a general account of "New Year's Addresses of American Newsboys," see Gerald D. McDonald in *Bookmen's Holiday*, 57, 58 (1943).

That of the *Daily Minnesotian* for 1856, for example, boosted the infant city of St. Paul and reviewed the march of events in the region in the following words:

Six years ago, where now our city stands,  
The Sioux were masters of these lovely lands.  
The Indian hunter o'er these prairies strayed,  
And in the woodland wooed his dusky maid.  
Where now resounds the whistle of the steam,  
The birch canoes then flew across the stream.  
And where the war-[w]hoop rang upon the air,  
Crowds weekly throng the holy house of  
prayer.

Civilization rolls its swelling floods,  
Across our plains, and through the forest  
woods.

Soft murmurs of the whizzing mills are heard,  
Where falling waters late the silence stirred.

More typical of booster greetings, however, is the *New Year's Address* of the *Winona Republican* of 1864. Its text concerns a wanderer who climbed the heights of Sugar Loaf Mountain, lay down to sleep, and dreamed that:

FROM the *St. Paul Dispatch* greeting, 1884





Upon the broad and level plain, which  
stretched beneath his feet,  
A city of importance rose, with domes and  
spires complete. . . .  
Some forty steamers, crowded full, along the  
Levee lay,  
All coming here to celebrate the Railroad's  
opening day.

The *Carriers' Greeting* of the *St. Paul Pioneer* for 1871 notes the growing importance of railroad transportation, stating that the people of Red Wing rejoice because:

The Railroad Cars with their bustle and life  
The once quiet village enter,  
And bind all the towns with an iron band  
To St. Paul, their railroad centre.

They can come to our stores on the morning  
train.

Do their shopping here and there,  
With bundles and parcels go home at night,  
And save enough for their fare.

A portion of the *First Annual Greeting* of the *St. Paul Daily Globe*, issued in 1879, is typical of many in the society's collection which express pride in the state. In the style made famous by Longfellow's *Hiawatha* the *Globe* writer announced:

In the land of the Dacotahs,  
Of the rolling Mississippi,  
Where the white cliffs guard the river,  
And the willows on the islands. . .  
Lies a region fair and fruitful  
Beaming 'neath the North Star's quiver,  
That her lakes return like mirrors.  
Proud she stands and looks about her,  
Rules with grace her broad dominions,  
Feels the world were poor without her.

The spirit of the times is evident in the *Annual Address* of the *St. Paul Pioneer* of 1868, which took note of the growing rivalry between Minneapolis and St. Paul. The greeting pictures a meeting at which the carriers of the two cities propose toasts.

One shaver, they called him "Gay Fellow,"

Declared, as he was hard pressed,  
He would give as a toast — "St. Paul,

Our City, the Star in the West!"

This startled a chap full of spirit,

Who lives farther up on the stream —

"Oh! bother St. Paul; she's an item

Compared with our "City of Steam!"

Don't mention your saints by the bushel;

Don't talk of your harbor, 'tis sham! —

I tell you we're better and smarter;

'Don't see it?' Why, look at our dam!"

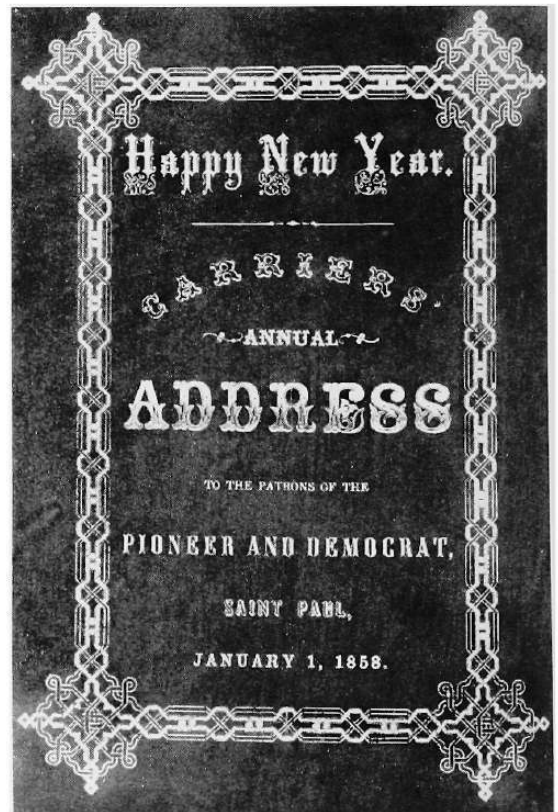
The argument was finally resolved by "a boy with a soul above pence" who said:

Fellows, *both* are fine cities

Good sisters must not take offence.

The *Annual Address* of the carriers of the *St. Paul Pioneer* for January 1, 1867, poked fun at a local problem:

REETING cover printed in gold on black



Saint Paul, her brightest gem, to-day,  
 Will sparkle with more brilliant ray  
 When three-score thousand people tramp  
 The streets at night *without a lamp*.  
 Our City Fathers, wise and stern  
 Determin'd are that we shall learn  
 At eve to stay our homes within,  
 Lest wand'ring, we be led to sin.

The Civil War received a large share of attention in the New Year's addresses of the 1860's. But in that published by the *St. Paul Daily Press* for 1866 the death of Abraham Lincoln took precedence. The carriers mourned:

O noble heart, in death now lying low!  
 O kindly face we never more may see!  
 Until so lost, we did not fully know  
 How large the debt our country owed to thee!

With few exceptions, the texts of carriers' addresses were anonymous, although such famous writers as Daniel Webster, Philip Freneau, James Whitcomb Riley, and Nathaniel Hawthorne are known to have composed some of the verses. Often the addresses were supposedly in the carriers' own words. For example, the newly established *St. Paul Globe's* greeting for 1879 begins, "O! my! aint it cold! and don't the wind blow!" The same address heralded the founding of the *Globe* in the following words:

So the planets kept rolling and rolling quite thin,  
 And the light it grew less the Universe in; —  
 When sudden and still, from the edge of the Sun,  
 A luminous ring was melted and spun;  
 And it spun, and it spun, like a top through the sky,  
 While each planet envied, each star winked its eye.  
 The beams from this object all darkness did probe,  
 And the Universe hailed with delight the new "GLOBE."

The carrier made an outspoken appeal for a tip in his greeting to the readers of the *Mower County Register* published at Austin on January 1, 1869.



Kind patrons and friends, once again I am here,  
 With holiday greetings and words of good cheer,  
 With songs for the season and rhymes for the times,  
 And an eye, like yourselves, always out for the dimes. . . .

So, wishing you many a Happy New Year . . .  
 I demurely suggest, as I start on my tramps,  
 That you haul out your wallet and down with the stamps.

The newsboy's lot was not always easy, since he started work about three in the morning in all kinds of weather. In the *St. Paul Press* greeting for 1872 the carrier reminded his patrons of this:

Cold blows the Winter wind, cheerless, forlorn  
 Twenty degrees below zero this morn; —  
 But the Carrier Boy  
 Braves cold and storm, . . .  
 Through sunshine and storm he has brought you the PRESS,  
 Make him happy to-day: — you will hardly do less.

Sometimes the paper itself made use of New Year's greetings to address its subscribers. The *Winona Republican* took occasion to remind them of their obligations in its carriers' greeting for 1864:

While all around us prospers well, we too, the blessing share,  
 Of patronage, which, to deserve, has ever been our care.  
 Our sheet is circulated well, and mostly paid for, too,  
 Though some few names upon our list are marked "arrearage due."



The *St. Paul Pioneer's* address of 1874 referred to the tradition of paying calls on New Year's Day:

Among the many visitors who come this festal day  
To eat your cake, and drink your wine, and compliments to pay,  
You surely will not think it strange if you receive a call  
From one who thinks himself, at least, the truest friend of all. . . .  
I labor on — with all my boys, in season to prepare  
And lay upon your breakfast board your daily mental fare.

What is perhaps the most elaborate greeting in the society's collection was issued by the *Minneapolis Tribune* in 1889 as a *Carrier's Calendar*. Obviously the work of a cartoonist, it features appropriate drawings accompanied by verses for every month of the year. Both text and illustrations are excellent examples of the humor of the day. For the month of June, for example, the verse reads:

"Why is your paper," laughed a man,  
"Like strawberries? Guess if you can."  
"Because they're good?" the carrier said.  
"No," shrieked the joker, "they are read."  
The carrier wept: the man fell dead.

The illustrated verse for September is reproduced above.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the custom of distributing newsboys' greetings was on the wane. Many newspaper publishers felt that it was being abused, and subscribers objected to paying for their papers all year and contributing additionally on New Year's. The tradition lingered,

however, for almost two decades. The most recent examples in the society's treasure chest date from 1917, when both the *Minneapolis Journal* and the *St. Paul Dispatch* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* issued photographically illustrated greetings. In addition to wishing its subscribers a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, the *St. Paul* greeting stressed the importance of both the newspaper and the carrier in the wartime life of the city, striking a note that does not appear in earlier greetings:

And the Carrier is a Servant and his daily journey brings  
To the homes of men the meaning of the mighty drift of things,  
Daily messages that whisper over land and over sea  
All the onward upward movement of the World that is to Be.

Though small, the society's collection of carriers' greetings is representative, for it reflects many facets of Minnesota life during almost three-quarters of a century. These pamphlets throw light on contemporary social customs; they reflect changing tastes in printing and journalism; and they picture the common man at work and at play. Anyone interested in social history, in holiday customs, or in nineteenth-century journalism cannot afford to overlook these colorful and informing booklets.





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