

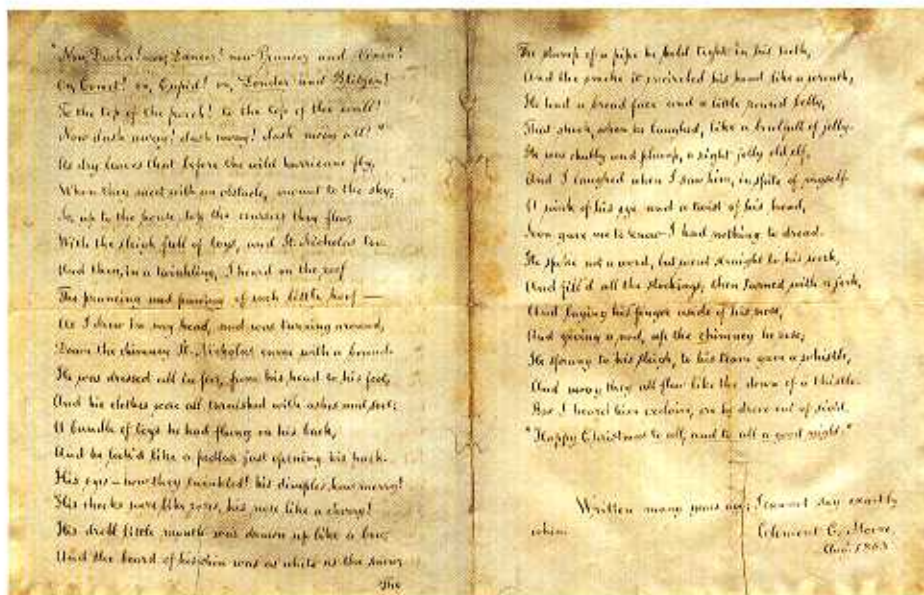
## By the Numbers

compiled by Amy Calabrese

1. Number of turkeys sold in the U.S. for Thanksgiving celebrations: **about 280 million**
2. Percentage increase of Roto-Rooter calls on the day after Thanksgiving: **46.4%**
3. Number of candy canes made during the Christmas season: **more than 1.76 billion**
4. Percentage of Americans who have never visited a dentist: **40%**
5. Number of lights on the Liberty Pole downtown holiday display: **4,100**
6. Approximate number of mall Santas in the United States: **45,827**
7. Number of times per minute a Visa card is used during the holiday buying season in the United States: **5,340**
8. Miles of cash register tape used at all Wegmans stores between Nov. 14 and Dec. 31 of last year: **2,624**
9. Number of minutes it takes a man to get bored when shopping: **72**
10. Number of minutes it takes a woman to get bored when shopping: **100**
11. Number of times that the amount of bubble wrap Office Depot sells yearly can circle the Earth: **2**
12. Year Farrah Fawcett appeared on the cover of 'Playboy' magazine wrapped in bubble wrap: **1997**

### SOURCES

- 1: www.hungrymonster.com
- 2: www.csmonitor.com
- 3, 7: www.twinklebulbs.com
- 4, 6, 9, 10: www.rickstevenson.com
- 5: City of Rochester
- 8, 9: Wegmans Food Markets
- 11: seattlepi.nwsource.com
- 12: www.houstonpress.net



## Not a creature was stirring

by Sandra Beckwith

An original copy of one of the country's most beloved holiday poems sits right here in Rochester.

Strong Museum is home to one of only four original, handwritten copies of the seasonal favorite "The Night before Christmas." The three-page, meticulously penned document was signed in 1853 by author Clement C. Moore, a wealthy New York City scholar and theologian.

The poem, first titled "A Visit from St. Nicholas," was written by Moore on Christmas Eve in 1822, while riding in a sleigh to pick up a holiday turkey. It wasn't published until the following year, appearing anonymously in the Troy, NY, *Sentinel* after a family friend gave it to the newspaper. In his introduction to the poem on page three, between an article on taking honey from the hive and a marriage announcement, the paper's editor told readers, "We hope our little patrons, both lads and lasses, will accept it as proof of our unfeigned good will toward them . . .". While the poem was reproduced many more times after that, Moore didn't admit authorship until 1844 because he was afraid the ode's lighthearted nature would undermine his reputation as an intellectual. He was, after all, the author of *A Compendious Lexicon of the Hebrew Language*.

But that seems to have opened the door for controversy. While there's no question that the document acquired by Strong in 1977 was handwritten by Moore, some

people say he wasn't the poem's creator. In 1999, the family of Revolutionary War major Henry Livingston, Jr., of Poughkeepsie hired literary sleuth Bob Foster to prove that Livingston wrote the piece, which had become one of the most memorized poems in America. After concluding that the writing was more in keeping with Livingston's style, Foster decreed in his book, *Author Unknown: On the Trail of Anonymous*, that Livingston, not Moore, was the author. But other experts, including Nancy Marshall, author of *The Night Before Christmas: A Descriptive Bibliography of Clement Clarke Moore's Immortal Poem*, have concluded that Livingston's family has no claim.

Carol Sandler, Strong Museum library director, sides with Marshall in the authorship debate, noting, "She is committed to the poem and the scholarship behind it." The museum acquired the poem, Sandler says, because of its significance as an American icon. It also complemented one of the museum's other important Christmas acquisitions, Thomas Nast's 1874 oil painting, *A Jolly Good Fellow*. While the two works were displayed together in 1995, the Moore poem is not now displayed. Those interested in the poem as an historical artifact, though, can order a reproduction of the December 23, 1823, *Sentinel* with the poem in it from the Troy Public Library for \$1.60. Contact troyref@uhs.lib.ny.us or 518-274-7071.

Sandra Beckwith, a Fairport writer, is convinced that Moore is the poem's author.