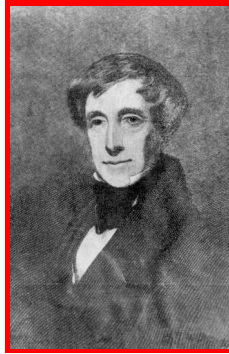


## REVEREND PROFESSOR CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE



**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**



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**1779**

July 15, Thursday: [Clement Clarke Moore](#) was born in Manhattan, the only child of heiress Charity Clarke and Dr. Benjamin Moore, Episcopal Bishop of New York, Rector of Trinity Church, and President of Columbia College.





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**1798**

[Clement Clarke Moore](#) graduated 1st in his class from Columbia University. As a graduation speaker might have remarked, a great future lay ahead.

“Hail, Columbia” was popular as a song — and not just among the members of the graduating class of Columbia University.



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1804

→ The Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#) attacked [Thomas Jefferson](#) anonymously in OBSERVATIONS UPON CERTAIN PASSAGES IN MR. JEFFERSON'S NOTES ON VIRGINIA, WHICH APPEAR TO HAVE A TENDENCY TO SUBVERT RELIGION AND ESTABLISH A FALSE PHILOSOPHY. He reported that he had been made suspicious, when this deep thinker started writing about mountains. It was clear that he was going to make an attempt to use the facts of geology to argue that the BIBLE contained incorrect information as to the age of the earth: "Whenever modern philosophers talk about mountains, something impious is likely to be near at hand."

**READ JEFFERSON TEXT**

It was presumably necessary for the Reverend to issue this tract anonymously, since although he was accusing the President of racism for his remark that "among the blacks there is misery enough, God knows, but not poetry," his own family, a family that was immensely wealthy, owned the black slaves Thomas, Charles, Ann, and Hester and was in no hurry to set them free.



"Philosophers like to practice philosophical thinking on me-too subjects that other philosophers call philosophy, and they leave their minds at the door when they are outside these subjects.... Spending time with these people, whose curiosity is focused on regimented on-the-shelf topics, feels stifling."



— Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *THE BLACK SWAN: THE IMPACT OF THE HIGHLY IMPROBABLE* (NY: Random House, 2007, pages 289-90)





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**1809**



The Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#) compiled A COMPENDIOUS LEXICON OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE, the 1st work of this kind in America.



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**1822**



December 23, Monday: Opferlied op.121b by [Ludwig van Beethoven](#) was performed for the initial time, in Pressburg (Bratislava).

To hear him relate the story in a decades-later timeframe, the Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#) was on this day going by sleigh to the Washington Market of New-York to purchase his family's [Christmas](#) turkey, when he got the idea for the poem that, a year later, would be sprung anonymously on the US public as "A Visit from St. Nicholas." (In this story, the part to be credited is that yes, Virginia, there is such a place as New-York, and that there on this day the Reverend did in fact proceed, and by sleigh, to the Washington Market — where he did in fact purchase a turkey.)

Most fundamentally, Christmas was an occasion when the social hierarchy itself was symbolically turned upside down, in a gesture that inverted designated roles of gender, age, and class. During the Christmas season those near the bottom of the social order acted high and mighty. Men might dress like women, and women might dress (and act) like men. Young people might imitate and mock their elders... A peasant or an apprentice might become 'Lord of Misrule' and mimic the authority of a real 'gentleman.' ...At other times of the year it was the poor who owed goods, labor, and deference to the rich. But on this occasion the tables were turned – literally. The poor –most often bands of boys and young men– claimed the right to march to the houses of the well-to-do, enter their halls, and receive gifts of food, drink, and sometimes money as well. And the rich had to let them in... In return, the peasants offered something of true value in a paternalistic society – their goodwill (Nissenbaum 1997:8-9; emphasis his). What these practices boiled down to was that a group of male teens would pound on the door of their wealthier neighbors, demand the best food and liquor in the house (or threaten to wreak havoc for the rest of the year if they did not) and move on to the next house, getting louder and rowdier as they collected more youths and became drunk. When indulged, these young men were essentially committing themselves to another year of toil for their upper class neighbors. This late-night, loud-mouthed revelry was called 'wassailing,' and lasted well into the nineteenth century. Christmas celebrations looked much the same throughout British North America. In Philadelphia, for example, In the first half of the nineteenth century Christmas comprised a week of amusements and celebrations such as horse races, pig chases, pigeon shoots, ox roasts, and hunting and skating parties. The thriving theatre district counted on heavy attendance at harlequinades and minstrel shows. Militia troops and clubs held balls and concerts, church women gave fairs, fire companies paraded new equipment, set fires, and brawled. Hundreds of pubs, groggeries, and cookshops treated patrons to the specialities of the season with extra liberality (Davis 1982:186-7). In addition to the gaming, revelers shot their guns into the air, advertising their parties to people for miles around, and dressed up in costumes and masks, roving the streets. These



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bands of young men, no longer restraining their boisterous activities to their home neighborhoods, were termed 'callithumpians,' and made charivari-like rough music, taking the conventions of marching bands and fife and drum corps and turning them inside out. Dressed in burlesque, they mocked real music with cracked pots, cowbells, kitchen utensils, bent horns, cow horns, fake trumpets, and the whole folk repertoire of homemade and pretend instruments (Davis 1982:188). Such activities were an extension of the earlier practices of wassailing, and took place to greater and lesser degrees in the cities and towns of early America. Upper and middle class American families understandably became very uncomfortable with the rowdy and downright dangerous behavior of these lower class bachelors. There were two reactions to their fear. First, police forces were formed as a night watch for the time from mid-December until just after the New Year (Davis 1982, Nissenbaum 1997). Crowds were disbanded, rowdies arrested, streets quieted, and 'respectable' neighborhoods kept safe. The second reaction was more subtle, but succeeded in drastically changing the nature of the holiday. Two publications occurred in the early nineteenth century that were creative works offering a new possibility for the celebration of Christmas. One was a poem written by the Episcopal minister Clement Clarke Moore, which he titled "A Visit from Saint Nicholas" and which is now often known as "The Night Before Christmas." Harry Smith, the narrator of a History Channel special on the history of Christmas, stated:

In 1822, Moore wrote a poem for his children about a good natured saint who came down the chimney on Christmas Eve. Moore dreamed up Dasher, Dancer, and the rest of the reindeer, along with Santa's entrance through the chimney. But at first he was embarrassed by the poem – the worried it was too frivolous for a man of the church (Guss 1997). His poem was first published without his permission by the editor friend of a visitor who heard him recite it. "He was initially annoyed, feeling that the verse was too simple to match with his more erudite writings. However, when he came to realize that thousands of children were enjoying his poem, he was delighted" (Templeman 1989:444).

"A Visit from Saint Nicholas" was published every year in an ever-increasing number of almanacs (Nissenbaum 1997). It acted to shift the focus of Christmas activity from callithumpian bands and annoyed wealthy citizens to well-behaved children and comfortable home life.<sup>1</sup>

## DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.

1. Baker, Lisa B. CHRISTIANITY, SECULARIZATION, AND CHRISTMAS IN THE UNITED STATES 1850 AND TODAY. Religious Studies/Sociology Senior Thesis for Professors Gary Herion and Ed Ambrose, May 1999



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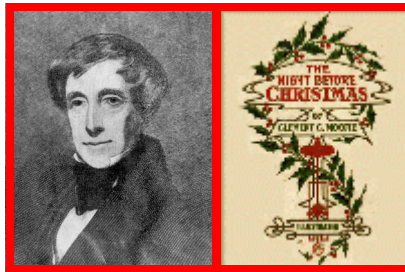
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1823



December 23, Tuesday: Thomas Wentworth Higginson was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

According to a story that has been not only told but also, for many years, credited, it was the Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#), a Professor of Oriental and Greek Literature, as well as Divinity and Biblical Learning, at the General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New-York, who anonymously contributed a genre poem titled "Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas" that appeared in this issue of the Troy NY [Sentinel](#). Except for the famous flying reindeer "Donner and Blitzen" being named instead "Dunder and Blixem" (dialect Dutch-American for "thunder and lightning"), the poem the newspaper printed as filler was what we now know as "The Night Before [Christmas](#)."<sup>2</sup>



WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND  
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF

2. It has been noted, however, that this little piece of cute sentimentality that was anonymously published, that two decades later would be owned up to by the Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#), a.) well matches the style and ethos of another local poet and newspaper contributor, the surveyor Henry Livingston, Jr. of Poughkeepsie NY, and b.) does not at all match either the style or the ethos of anything that we know for sure that the Reverend Moore actually authored. In addition, we know c.) that Livingston was familiar with the sort of local dialect that included "Dunder and Blixem." As a final item, we know d.) that religious professionals are capable of sometimes not telling the exact truth.



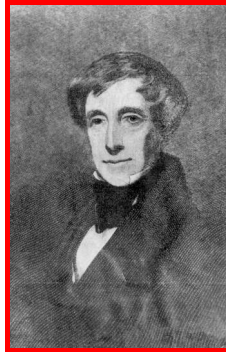


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**1840**

In about this year, the Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#) had his portrait painted. This is not the painting from life, but is an engraving by J.W. Evans that has been based upon it.



(Doesn't he smile like Mr. Rogers? Would Mr. Rogers lie to you?)

**NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT**





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1844

The Episcopalian Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#), Professor of Classics at the General Theological Seminary in New-York, author of A COMPENDIOUS LEXICON OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE, translator of the works of [Juvenal](#) into English, in this year wrote to the owner of the Troy NY [Sentinel](#), to inquire whether anyone still at that news office knew anything about the authorship of the anonymous poem “Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas” that they had published in 1823, the one that in the interim two decades had become so inordinately famous as “The Night Before [Christmas](#).” He must have supposed that we’d never find or figure out this letter of inquiry, for as soon as the Reverend learned that everyone who might know anything about the actual provenance of this poem was already deceased—as soon as he believed himself to be entirely safe in his little self-embellishment— he inserted this famous poem as just another item among many, in an anthology that he was currently having printed, entitled POEMS, of his own writings. He also included two poems by his wife for which he himself, in the preface, specifically claimed authorship, and some 35 other dubious pieces.<sup>3</sup>

Thus it is that we now have editions such as this one below:



However, this year wasn’t entirely a disaster year for poetry, as a real poet named Gerard Manley Hopkins was born.

3. He would proceed to copy out a number of holographs of the poem in his own handwriting, and these copies of the poem allegedly written by the Reverend Professor [Clement Clarke Moore](#) would eventually fetch, in 1997 in an auction at Christie’s, the grand sum of \$211,000. — That’s not bad for a poem by Anon. that originally got published for free as a piece of newspaper filler! — One wonders how this \$211,000 compares with the lifetime royalties of a poet such as Robert Frost or e.e. cummings.



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**1852**

Publication of the Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#)'s GEORGE CASTRIOT, SURNAMED SCANDERBEG, KING OF ALBANIA.

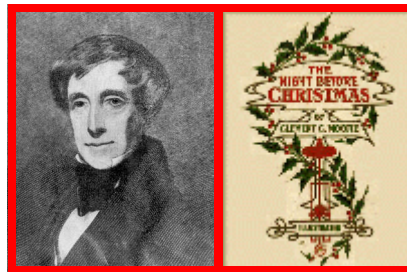


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1860

In residence in [Newport, Rhode Island](#) during this period was an elderly religious scholar, the Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#), the gent who most belatedly and probably falsely in 1844 had staked a claim to have been the author of the anonymous immortal-because-unforgettable piece of doggerel “The Night Before Christmas.”<sup>4</sup>



THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT



“Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project

Clement Clarke Moore

4. Everyone had believed him when he had made this unsubstantiated claim, of course, despite the fact that he had never been able to produce any piece of doggerel anywhere near this memorable. –But now we know that he had carefully checked as to the state of the evidence, to reassure himself that he was not going to be found out, prior to publicly asserting the claim.



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**1863**

July 10, Friday: [Clement Clarke Moore](#) died notorious, at his summer home in [Newport, Rhode Island](#). In addition to translating the works of [Juvenal](#) into English, and editing his father's sermons, and authoring polemical pamphlets against the subversion of religion by doubters, this scholar had been the author of the immortal "The Night Before Christmas" (NOT!)



The body would be interred in the Trinity Cemetery of the Church of the Intercession, on Upper Broadway at 155th Street in New-York.

A report from Walt Whitman:

### "Specimen Days"

Still the camp opposite – perhaps fifty or sixty tents. Some of the men are cleaning their sabres (pleasant to-day,) some brushing boots, some laying off, reading, writing – some cooking, some sleeping. On long temporary cross-sticks back of the tents are cavalry accoutrements – blankets and overcoats are hung out to air – there are the squads of horses tether'd, feeding, continually stamping and whisking their tails to keep off flies. I sit long in my third story window and look at the scene – a hundred little things going on – peculiar objects connected with the camp that could not be described, any one of them justly, without much minute drawing and coloring in words.

On this day and the following one, there was fighting on the coast of South Carolina at Fort Wagner / Morris Island. Union artillery on Folly Island together with Rear Admiral John Dahlgren's fleet of ironclads opened fire on Confederate defenses of Morris Island. The bombardment provided cover for Brigadier General George C. Strong's brigade, which crossed Light House Inlet and landed by boats on the southern tip of the island. Strong's troops advanced, capturing several batteries, to within range of Confederate Fort Wagner. At dawn on July 11th, Strong attacked the fort. Soldiers of the 7th Connecticut reached the parapet but, unsupported, were thrown back.



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1997

Some holographs of the anonymous newspaper doggerel that had become famous as “The Night Before [Christmas](#),” copies that had been written out in longhand in late life (he had died in 1863) by the man who had famously and successfully laid claim to be the author, a religious scholar, the Reverend Professor [Clement Clarke Moore](#) of New-York, were auctioned at Christie’s. They fetched the grand sum of \$211,000. This is a sum of money which is astonishing for any poem, let alone for a poem by Anon. that had originated as mere newspaper filler — one wonders how such a sum compares with the lifetime royalties of a poet such as Robert Frost or e.e. cummings!<sup>5</sup>



“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,  
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY

5. It is not likely that the Reverend [Clement Clarke Moore](#) actually authored this poem that he had belatedly claimed, and that he had in late life copied out a number of times in his own handwriting. Both the style and the ethos of the piece match exceedingly well with the sort of stuff that had been being written at that time by a Dutch-speaking poet in Poughkeepsie, New York named Henry Livingston, Jr.



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: January 14, 2014



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# *ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT*

## *GENERATION HOTLINE*



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.





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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.