

BETSY-TACY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER #4

The next business meeting of the Betsy Tacy Society will be July 15, 1991 at 8:00 p.m. at the North Mankato Library.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY BETSY

The Betsy-Tacy Society hosted a party in honor of Maud Hart Lovelace's 99th birthday on Saturday, April 27, 1991. Mike Miller of Action Realty generously donated the use of his businessplace for the party, which was significant because it is a beautiful home right out of the Betsy-Tacy era. The party was held in a bright and cheery sun-porch room which the Society decorated with fresh garden flowers and Betsy-Tacy dolls. The Society served punch and birthday cake to approximately 50 people from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. One of the guests was Dollie Anderson who had been a childhood friend of Helen Hart (Margaret).

After clean-up, the Society Board, including Sharla Whalen, relaxed at Doris Berger's home to discuss convention plans for 1992. We are happy to report that everything is coming along nicely and some wonderful and exciting events are in the works for Betsy-Tacy fans of all ages. We hope to see you all in Deep Valley on July 10-12 in 1992.

OUR NEXT EVENT - SUMMER AT MURMURING LAKE

Escape the sweltering heat of summer in the city - of Deep Valley. Spend the day picnicking at Murmuring Lake just like Betsy's family would have done. The summer event sponsored by the Betsy-Tacy Society will be a pot-luck picnic, Sunday, August 25, 1991 at 1:00 p.m. on the shores of Madison (Murmuring) Lake. Bring your own dishes, utensils, beverages, and something special to share. Betsy always liked what she saw on Tacy's plate and Tacy liked what was on Betsy's. So they divided what they had to share with each other. In this spirit, we hope to have some tasty home-made goodies from each other's kitchens to sample. We hope the Minnesota weather and cool lake breezes will cooperate for an enjoyable day of feasting. Directions to the picnic site begin at Menards at the intersection of Highways #22 and #14. Leaving Menard's corner, go East on Highway #14 for exactly 3 miles to Eagle Lake. Go straight ahead on County #17 (not on #14 to the right). Follow County #17 for 3 miles, turn left on Highway #60. Go 1.7 miles to County Road #44, turn right and follow #44 around the lake 1/2 mile. You will see North Shore Park on your right. There is a shelter but not many tables, so be there early.

1992 BETSY-TACY CONVENTION PLANS

The itinerary for the for the 1992 Betsy-Tacy Convention, commemorating Maud Hart Lovelace's centenary year, is being finalized. The Convention will take place in Mankato July 10-12, 1992. The proceedings will begin on Friday evening with a birthday party and Trivia Bee (so start rereading your Betsy-Tacy books now!). Saturday's events include walking tours of the Betsy-Tacy neighborhoods described in the series. Convention-goers can then adjourn to the air-conditioned comfort of the Holiday Inn for a variety of speakers and presentations. Some of our topics and speakers: "Images of Teen Age Life in the World and Work of Maud Hart Lovelace" by Dr. Norma Noonan; a "Tasting Tea" of foods mentioned in the series by home economist Betsy Norum; "Christmas in Deep Valley" - a slide show of turn-of-the-century Mankato street and shop scenes, followed by a Christmas party ala Mrs. Poppy by Kelly Reuter; "Domestic Life at the Rays" - discussing the importance of tradition and ritual to Betsy and why her home life has such appeal to readers, by Rev. Barbara Mraz; "Collectors Club," focusing on the value, availability, and strategies for locating out-of-print Lovelace titles, by Colleen Timmins; "Betsy-Tacy Fashion" with a display of vintage clothing by Lona Falen; "The Great World Revisited" - a mini travel hour by Washington Post Journalist Beth Hudson, retracing the heroine's footsteps in Betsy and the Great World.

On Sunday we will visit to Madison Lake (Betsy's Murmuring Lake) to pay a call on Betsy's mother's home (as the Rays did on their yearly anniversary trip). The convention will officially conclude with lunch at the Inn on the Lake (mentioned in many of the high school books). For those whose travel plans permit, there will be a Sunday Night Lunch, complete with onion sandwiches.

We are looking for presenters for other topics, such as: "The Historical Novels of Maud Hart Lovelace." "We need help from antiques-experts for a presentation on everyday household articles likely to have been found in the Hart house. We welcome any suggestions for other topics and are hoping for a rich diversity in subject and speaker. If you don't care to be a speaker, there are many other ways to get involved. Please write to:

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

If anyone would like to make a contribution to this newsletter, such as letters from Maud, pictures, your thoughts regarding her writings, black and white pen and ink sketches, etc., please write to Lona Falen, 303 Meadow Wood Drive, Mankato, MN 56001.

Rosalie Ziomek of Evanston, Illinois describes her feelings on a first trip to Mankato:

"I wandered over to the book store (at the mall) and decided to indulge myself by buying the first four Betsy-Tacy books. The next day when we were about to leave I was feeling very weepy and sad about leaving Mankato and Betsy, because the visit had really been almost time-travel for me and I would miss it all so much. Then I picked up the bag with the books in it and I realized that I was taking the important part with me - the books! Maud Hart Lovelace had given me the best gift of all .. by writing these books she has shared and will share her life with countless others. I don't have to live in Mankato (although I'd love to) and I don't have to time-travel back to 1910 (although I'd love to) - I can live in Mankato in 1910 and know some of the most wonderful people ever. In fact anytime I want to visit my friend Betsy, all I have to do is open those books, and she'll be there for me."

Some more thoughts on the Betsy-Tacy Series from the letters of Maud Hart Lovelace Fans:

"I thought I was the only person who had grown up with those wonderful books! The library in Westfield, New Jersey had the whole series and I read them all during the 1950's. Betsy really influenced my childhood - I even ran away in the 4th grade to become a writer! I had two neighborhood friends who became a willing Tacy and Tib and I made paperdolls for us all and reenacted favorite chapters both with dolls and semi-staged productions!" Kendra Krienke, New York City

"Betsy, Tacy, and Tib and all their friends were such a big part of my growing-up years -- I was born in 1934 -- and now I am reading about them with a granddaughter. I could go on and on about what the books have meant to me." Marjorie Sherrill, Tucson, AZ

"I discovered Betsy's Wedding purely by coincidence at the library when I was thirteen years old, and since then I've read the series through each year." Joanne Mariani, Stratford, CT

"As a native Californian who grew up reading the Betsy-Tacy books, it was such a thrill for me to visit Mrs. Lovelace's hometown on my first visit to Minnesota last summer. While there my husband and I had a picnic on top of the hill and I made him drink hot chocolate with me, as Betsy and Tacy did - though it wasn't out of a smokey pail." Donna Mallon, El Cajon, CA

"It has been such a surprise to me to learn that a number of books or authors whom I loved are not the sole possessions of my heart. Despite the fact that reading is a solitary pursuit, there is something to be said for connecting with others who love the same books. Especially when you've read every book someone writes over and over and you know there will be no more. Its nice to have others to help think about it some more." Michele Franck, Boston, MA

"It was such a thrill to see all the places Maud Hart Lovelace wrote about in her books. I read all ten of my 'Betsy Books' every summer. I also read Emily of Deep Valley which my local library has and get her other related books from the inter-library system. I wish they were in print so that I could purchase them. I guess I feel like Betsy did in Chapter 23 of Heaven to Betsy when She and Julia approached Mr. Ray on the subject of joining the Episcopal Church. I couldn't tell you in person how dear my 'Betsy Books' are to me, but I could write you an essay on the subject." Kathy Chevrette, Stevensville, MI

"Those books gave me so much pleasure when I was younger that it is really nice to remember them and find out there are a lot of other people like myself that also love Betsy, Tacy, and Tib. I think I was 9 when I first read Betsy Tacy. The library was around the corner from where I lived in Cleveland, Ohio. It was one of the few places my folks let me go to by myself. I used to roller skate up there at least twice a day and spend literally hours there reading. The particular summer I read Betsy Tacy, I started with all the A's and read most all the books in the young adults fiction section, all the way to Z. I think I read Betsy in Spite of Herself first and then read all the earlier books in the children's section. I just love books that are written in series and continue with the same characters." Jackie Kraemer, Phoenix, AZ

"I really didn't think there was anyone who loved the Betsy books and Maud Hart Lovelace as I did. Sometimes I think I must be one of the chosen few!"

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"I really didn't think there was anyone who loved the Betsy books and Maud Hart Lovelace as I did. Sometimes I think I must be one of the characters reincarnated!!" Brenda Worsley, Albany, GA

"I was so happy to find out that Mankato has actually started a Betsy-Tacy Society! I knew there had to be others who loved Mrs. Lovelace's books the way I did!" Laura Vada, Garfield Heights, OH

"I own most of the Betsy-Tacy books, and read them once a year religiously. I find them just as meaningful today as I did the first time I read them - and what a painless way to learn history! I've often wanted to visit Deep Valley and see where the Crowd grew up. Whenever I go Christmas shopping, I think of Betsy, Tacy and Tib and their annual shopping spree, and stopping at Heinz's afterward. ... Remember how Betsy loved the smell of a fresh, clean notebook? (If Betsy were around today...) I think she might continue to write poetry in her notebooks, and maybe certain types of stories. Joe, on the other hand, would love the computer. I see this newspaper man buying modems and subscribing to information services - even carrying a portable in his briefcase." Nancy Masek, Garfield Heights, OH

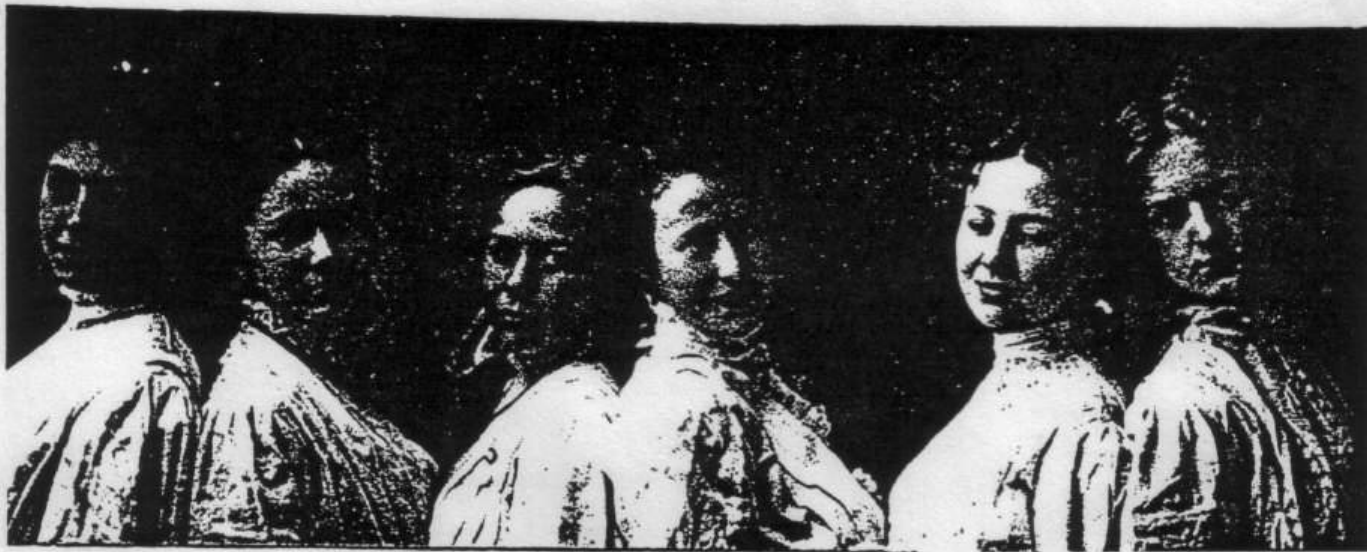
The last two Lovelace fans quoted above live in the same suburb of Cleveland, OH - but they joined the Betsy-Tacy Society without knowing each other. Nancy and Laura are members of the Cleveland Triumvirate, a self-proclaimed unofficial Eastern branch of the Betsy-Tacy Society. They hope to regularly contribute to this newsletter under the heading "From Uncle Keith's Trunk."

"FROM UNCLE KEITH'S TRUNK," by NANCY MASEK

Things I've learned from the Betsy-Tacy books:

1. The best way to get organized is to make a list.
2. Do things right the first time so you won't have to do them again.
3. Red-haired people do not always have a temper.
4. It is possible to be pretty and practical at the same time.
5. Sororities limit one's friendships.
6. Changing your name does not change your personality.
7. Teenagers have always done dumb things.
8. Apple blossoms are rosy.

As I began writing this article, I wanted to organize my thoughts as I felt Betsy would. But eight items down the list I realized that the really important things - things that have influenced my head and heart all these years cannot possibly be put down in some sort of numerical order. The thoughts, emotions, ideals, traditions, and sense of history that these characters have brought into my life are for feeling, not listing. Although I saw the people, places and events through Betsy's eyes, I made each of them my own by absorbing them into my consciousness without the help of an abacus, adding machine, or calculator. So I'll not put numerical values on the lessons learned from Misses Ray, Kelly, Mueller, et. al., but appreciate them each in my own way in my own time. However, the next time one of my friends gets married - I wonder if you can still buy organdy aprons?



JOIN THE CROWD - BECOME A MEMBER

Betsy-Tacy Society Membership Form

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____

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Betsy-Tacy Society Membership Form

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____
_____ Street City State Zip

Membership Levels

_____ Patron \$25.00 & up _____ Family \$10.00
_____ Individual \$5.00 _____ Student \$2.00

Membership fees will be due in September for the 1991-1992 year. Anyone who joined the society after May 1 of any year shall receive membership to run through the following year. Please send your membership form and your check to: Lona Falen, 303 Meadow Wood Dr., Mankato, MN 56001. If you are already a member, pass this membership form along to a friend.

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MRS. KELLY'S CAKE MYSTERY

Kelly Reuter of Amboy, MN and Sharla Whalen of Naperville, IL have had a long-running debate on the subject of Mrs. Kelly's fresh unfrosted cake (which was a favorite of Betsy). The flavor of this cake is never specified in the Betsy-Tacy books. Kelly thinks it was chocolate, like a recipe her mother always used, called scramble cake. It can be mixed right in the pan. The egg-less recipe calls for cocoa rather than chocolate and oil rather than butter, resulting in a dense, moist chocolate cake, served without frosting.

Sharla, on the other hand, pictures the unfrosted cake as a yellow batter.

Beth Hudson of Austin, TX casts her vote this way: "As for the unfrosted cakes that Mrs. Kelly made, I have a strong opinion. It's the cake I make. I make an angel food cake (with a Betty Crocker mix) but I add half a cup of cocoa and 1 tsp of chocolate extract to the mix. It makes beautiful (fat-free) chocolate cake -- unfrosted. Sometimes I sprinkle it with powdered sugar. I always imagine this is just like the cake Mrs. Kelly made."

What do other Betsy-Tacy readers think? Send your vote to: Lona Falen, 303 Meadow Wood Dr., Mankato, MN 56001. Results will be published in the next newsletter.

ORDERING THE BETSY-TACY BOOKS

HarperCollins has a new toll-free number for customer orders. To obtain any of the first six Betsy-Tacy books in paperback, call 1-800-331-3761. To backorder one of the books in hardback, ask your local bookstore to place a special order. (They won't charge you until the books come in, if it ever come in.) Perhaps if enough of us place backorders, HarperCollins will reprint! Don't forget to write and urge reprinting: HarperCollins Publishers, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY HOURS

Many Betsy-Tacy Society members have inquired about when the Carnegie Library (now the Carnegie Art Center) is open. The building is open to the public on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. You can call 507-625-2730 for additional information and appointments.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Congratulations to all of our members in the Betsy-Tacy Society! As of this time we have 145 members. Because of your dues we have been able to host a 50th Anniversary Party of the publication of the first Betsy-Tacy book, have two birthday parties for Maud, publish four newsletters and be a part of several Mankato community functions. At this time we feel comfortable with submitting our charter to a lawyer because as of April 1, 1991, the Betsy-Tacy Society has \$525 in our savings account and \$614.33 in our checking account. We have designated some of this money for the charter and some for signs in the Lincoln Park area. We need some of these funds to host the National Convention planned for 1992. Some of the money in our savings was donated with hopes that it would help in buying one of the Betsy-Tacy houses.

Shirley Lieske - Treasurer

BEND OF THE RIVER FESTIVAL

The Bend of the River Festival Committee would like us to report that it has made one of its goals to encourage the community to be more aware of its local history and to be proud of its heritage. In keeping with that goal, an added feature of this year's festival will be crowning a HILL STREET BETSY AND TACY for children in grades 1 to 3, and a DEEP VALLEY BETSY AND TACY for children in grades 4-6. The children have submitted poems, stories, and art work. The Committee will give awards on July 5th at 4:00 in the Mankato Mall. The winners will ride in a horse-drawn surrey with fringe on the top in The Bend of the River Parade on July 6th.

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Mankato, MN 56001

