

Deep Valley Sun

NEWSLETTER OF THE BETSY-TACY SOCIETY

To promote and preserve Maud Hart Lovelace's legacy and her work, encourage and support literacy and conserve historic landmarks in Mankato

VOL. 4 ISSUE 2

JULY 2008

One of our hundred-dollar-prize "short, short stories"—another to come next month



"The time to be married is when you are bored," proclaimed Victoria. "I never was less bored in my life!"

The Fires of Genius

By Maud Palmer Hart—Illustration by George Brehm

I'LL scrub floors! I'll teach school! I may even get married! Oh, Lord!" said Victoria Wren Anderson.

Victoria Wren Anderson! Doesn't that sound faintly familiar to you? Say it does, and Victoria will weep with joy while all the Wrens and all the

Andersons will embrace with tears! Victoria Wren Anderson! You must have seen it.

But you will see it often enough by and by. The crisply inviting magazines which litter your library table will bear it blazoned forth on their very covers, those delectable covers where eternally jaunty girls are eternally swimming and skating and dancing. "In this issue! A gripping story of modern life, by Victoria Wren Anderson!" That is the way it will be after awhile.

Such beautiful stories she writes! If the villainous, bushy-haired, shifty-eyed editors would only read her carefully typed

Persons in the Story

VICTORIA ANDERSON, a girl whom we shall all know when she becomes a famous writer

HER MOTHER, who from the first has our entire sympathy

HER LITTLE BROTHER

HARLEY COX, one of those young, handsome, longsuffering lovers, found chiefly in tales of this kind

manuscripts before slipping them back into the stamped self-addressed envelopes which she never fails to enclose, she would become a celebrity now while she is still young and good-looking. But don't get me started on that.

Perhaps you assume that it was the return of a manuscript which drove Victoria to that reckless outburst of hers. If so, your acquaintance with the

writing game is but casual. To a rising young authoress, the return of a manuscript is less than an incident. "Any mail this morning, dear?" Mrs. Anderson would inquire, if Victoria answered the postman's knock. "Only the electric light bill and 'The Girl with Lavender Eyes,'" Victoria would respond. And then as she ripped open

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The Betsy-Tacy Society

Est. 1990
P.O. Box 94
Mankato, MN 56002-0094
507-345-9777
www.betsy-tacysociety.org
501(c)3 organization

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shopkeeper@betsy-tacysociety.org

Shop Catalog:

Shop our online catalog: www.betsy-tacysociety.org. PayPal available.
For a catalog: send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to P.O. Box 94, Mankato, MN 56002-0094 and mark CATALOG on the front of the envelope.

Tacy's House and Gift Shop

Open every Saturday afternoon from 1:00 - 3:00 pm. Tacy's House is located at 332 Center Street in Mankato and Betsy's House is at 333 Center Street.
There is no admission during these hours.

Special House Visits: Call 507-345-9777
For special house visits, advance reservations are requested two weeks in advance.
Free for members. Adults: \$3.00 Children ages 5-16: \$1.00

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Welcome New Members

Teresa Anderson
Janet Lee Barton
Courtney Crepeau
Gayle Dyess
Katie Esslinger
Taylor Huntley
Sara Keech
Elisa Lynn Kinar
Roberta Madison
Heather Mandel
Barbara Mattill
Ruth McGuire
Ginny Mead
Linda Tolia
Kristen Walseth
Barbara Wandersee

New Lifetime Members

Bonnie Bolander
Phyllis Borchart
Jammie Dennin
Emily Gold
Carol Hayes
Judith Hurlay
Laurie Pengra
Janice Sasser

Donations

The BTS gratefully acknowledges donations received from February 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008 from the following:

Donations to \$49

Amato, Kathryn
Boyce, David & Doris
Chandler, Abigail
Davis-Kay, Jennifer - Mortgage
Delta Zeta Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi
Dougan, Jocelyn
Greater New York Chapter BTS
Huntley, Mary
Jepson, Ellen
Jones, Karen
Kastner, Ray & JoAnn
Lockwood, Annie Elizabeth
Madlins, Rebecca
Matson, Sara
Maud Hart Lovelace Society - In Memory of Shirley Lieske
Mead, Ginny
Rouzer, Linda
Thomas, Deborah - Mortgage
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Woods, Rita
Worsley, Brenda

Donations \$50 - \$99

Baker, Susan
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Gorrell, Betsy
Parker, John - In Memory of Rose Marie Parker
Paskal, Marti
Sheppard, Flossie - In Honor of Marian Anderson

Donations \$100 - \$499

All designated to Burn the Mortgage
Baughman, Jean
Birbeck, Marilyn
Brooks, Marilyn
Carter, Barbara
Chuba, Julie - In Honor of Raymond & Margaret Chuba
DeWeese, Shirley
Freytmuth, Patricia
Gold, Emily - In Memory of Clara Krucoff
Hartwick, Barbara - In Memory of My

Family

Holman, Leah
Johnson, Sally
Koebler, Kristeen & 5th grade class
Kossack, Joan
Lowe, Sandy - In Honor of Kyla & Serra Hagedorn
Masters, Lee & Wendi - In Honor of Tacy Masters
Maud Hart Lovelace Listserv - In Honor of Maud Hart Lovelace
Parnell, June
Schultz, Jo
Sherman, Betsy
Tanghe, Mary - In Honor of Lona Falencykowski
Timmins, Colleen
Welsch, Carol - In Memory of Jean & Herman Graham Jr.

Donations \$500 - \$1,000

All designated to Burn the Mortgage
Baxter, Kathleen
Hindersman, Christie
King, Louise - In Memory of Marion Willard Everett (Camey)
Kirch, Peggy - In Memory of Frances Bick Kenney Kirch
Pearl, Nancy

Paver Fundraiser

February 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008

Andres, Heidi
Arends, Carole
Banwart, Penny & Roger
Bass, Heather
Berger, Doris
Blake, Michele
Blasier, Devon
Brown, Susan & Robert
Buchholz, Jennifer
Camoras, Roxanne
Canavan, Colleen Ann
Chuba, Julie
Cleaveland, Nancy
Cooper, Ginnie
Cumiskey, June
Dean, Gail
Dempsey, Judy
Donahoe, Michael & Mary
Fahling, Connie
Farrell, Carol
Ferguson, Laura
Freytmuth, Patricia
Gerlach, Kate
Gilbertson, Mary Ann
Gold, Emily
Greater New York Chapter BTS
Hanson, Kathryn
Hardenbergh, Gail
Hartwick, Barbara
Holland, Deb
Hurley, Judith
Kastner, JoAnn & Ray
Katoland Connection
Kirch, Peggy, Jim, Jack, Elizabeth, Sally & Mary Ann
Koebler, Kristeen & 5th grade class
Kozak, Carla
Laumann, Brenda
Laven, Candace & Doug
Mandel, Heather
Masters, Wendi & Lee
Mathews-Lingen, Ann
Mattill, Phyllis
Maud Hart Lovelace Society
Melby, Carmen
Natvig, Marsha
Neuls-Bates, Carol
Nezin, Suzanne
Rolek, Tricia

Roselle, Melissa
Schultz, Carol
Shapiro, Nancy
Sjulstad, Patti & Greg
Small, Patricia
Sundquist, Betsy
Thomas, Norma & John

Grants Received

City of Mankato - \$5,000 for Betsy's House Restoration
Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation - \$10,000 for Betsy's House Restoration

In-Kind Donations

Balloon Art & Decorating
Susan Brown
Contents
Cooks & Company
Corporate Graphics
Diamond Vogel Paints
Freelance Group
Green Thumb Garden Center
Leonard Street & Deinard
MAS Communications
Navitor
Pub 500

If you prefer your name not be published as a donor, please advise us of your wish.

Volunteers

February 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008

Elyse Anderson
Ana-Brit Asplen
Penny Banwart
Dan Barnett & STS
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Sarah Beiswanger
Michele Blake
Bob Brown
Joan Brown
Susan Brown
Sara Davis
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David & Justine Schrader
Justine Schrader
Ken & Julie Schrader
Gabriel Stenzel
Matthew Stenzel
Mandy Stenzel
Avigail Strege
Norma Thomas
Denny Weis

Artifacts & Archive Donations

February 1, 2008 to May 31, 2008
Susan Baker - 3 chairs
Jane Baird - cupboard and rocker
Diane Pearson - dry sink

Wish list

- Antique library table
- Archival boxes & supplies for artifacts
- Copy Machine
- LCD projector
- Rain Barrel for Betsy's house

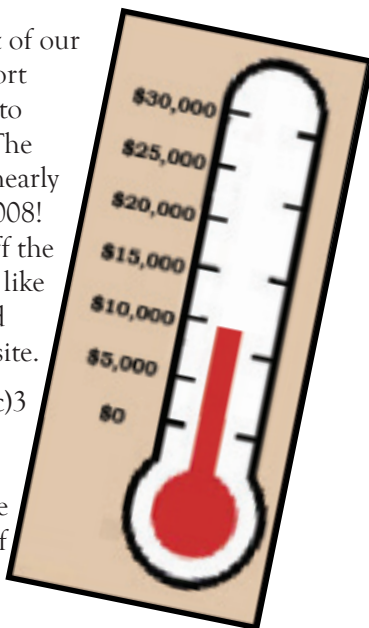
Wishes Fulfilled

- Dry Sink for Betsy's house

Mortgage News

Thanks to the generous support of our members, we are pleased to report the mortgage has been reduced to \$9,955.95 as of May 31, 2008. The principle has been reduced to nearly half of what it was in January 2008! Help us reach our goal to pay off the mortgage in 2008! If you would like to help, you can find details and download a form from our website.

The Betsy-Tacy Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and donations are tax-deductible. Please mark "Burn the Mortgage Fundraiser" in the memo line of your check.



Paver Fundraiser

The first group of engraved pavers were laid when Hometown returned in June. This fundraiser will continue until the entire space is filled with engraved pavers! Blank pavers were laid and will be replaced by engraved pavers as the orders come in. There is still time to get your name in stone or to give this as a gift in honor or memory of your loved ones. An order form can be downloaded from our website.



REMEMBER: the BTS is a non-profit organization and your donations may be tax deductible.

Other Ways You Can Help BTS:

- Membership
- Amazon.com
- TRCA Team Card
- eBay Giving Works
- Greenraising
- Volunteer

For details, visit our website: www.betsy-tacysociety.org or see page 7 in the March 2008 issue of the Deep Valley Sun.

Betsy's House Restoration News

Thanks to the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation and the City of Mankato Community Grant Program, we have received funds to continue our restoration work. The restoration committee and volunteers been busy sanding and painting the floors and the new millwork this spring. Hometown returned to film the restoration in June. Watch our website for updates throughout the summer. The fall newsletter will contain more information of our progress.

2009 Betsy-Tacy Convention

The next Betsy-Tacy convention is scheduled for July 17-20, 2009. More details to follow in the next newsletter. For more information on the convention, visit: <http://web.mac.com/btconvention>

Save the Date!

Deep Valley Vignettes - Betsy-Tacy On Stage

July 11-13, 2008

In celebration of Minnesota's Sesquicentennial and in honor of author Maud Hart Lovelace, the Amboy Area Community Theatre will present a new original play based on the Betsy-Tacy books. Enjoy the music, dance, fashion and fun of Betsy's era in this new original production. Performances are at 7 pm on Friday and Saturday and 2 pm on Sunday. For more information contact Kelly Reuter: kellyreuter_bts@hotmail.com

Important Message from the Board . . .

We've been overwhelmed by the response to our recent fundraising efforts to restore the historic homes of Betsy and Tacy, including the "Burn the Mortgage" campaign, the paver fundraiser, and a breakfast buffet held at Pub 500 in Mankato in April where over \$700 was raised for the BTS! The generosity of our members and supporters has been incredibly heartening, and you can see the results in the progress that has been made at the houses.

Unfortunately, with this success also comes a downside. With most donations designated for the restoration efforts and the mortgage reduction, our general operating funds are suffering. Currently we **cannot** cover the costs of our regular monthly operating expenses, which include utility bills, insurance, street assessments, shop re-stock, website hosting fees, producing the Deep Valley Sun, and the salary of our part-time director. Although our online shop and memberships produce a revenue stream, our operating costs are still running at a deficit. Most of our savings have gone into the house restoration, so there is no cushion left to fall back on.

We recognize that these are difficult financial times for many of our members, and we are reluctant to present you with yet another plea for funds or to sound ungrateful - in fact, we are deeply thankful for your faithful support. But if you have been planning on renewing your membership, or thinking about making a shop purchase, we urge you to consider doing so now. As always, we couldn't do what we do without you!

With Appreciation,
The Betsy-Tacy Society Board of Directors

Your Class Can Help Save Betsy's House!

Dr. Kris Koebler's 5th grade class from Collegiate School in Richmond, VA held a bake sale and raised \$300.00 for the restoration of Betsy's House!



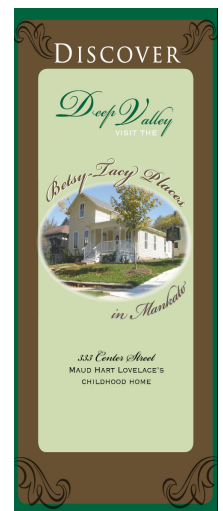
Front: Eleanor, Meriwether, Meghan, Faith, Allie S. **Middle:** Dr. Koebler, Bailey, Mary Moncure, Ann-Robert, Allie D., Emma, Gabriela, Clair, Kyra, Katie **Back:** Missy, Eliza, Vaughan, Meg, Emily, Linda

"I teach fifth grade in a private school in Richmond, VA, and I firmly believe in reading aloud to my students every day. For a few years, I was reading random books, and then a series that started out fine but became more and more sophisticated with each book. It got to the point where I was having to edit out the inappropriate material and the books lost their appeal for me. I talked to a clerk at a local bookstore and she recommended the Betsy-Tacy books. I had not read them as a girl, but a number of my friends had. I began reading them that spring and the students LOVED them. So I have continued

the tradition each year for ten or more years now. The idea for the bake sale was actually generated by a class five years ago - they wanted to do something to help restore Betsy's house because I had visited Mankato and the Tacy House that previous summer and had put up a bulletin board of photos of Tacy's House, Lincoln Park, the "bench," and the recently-purchased Betsy House. We've held a bake sale every year since then, and the class loves doing it." ~ Dr. Kris Koebler, Collegiate School, Richmond, VA

New Betsy-Tacy Brochure

We are proud to announce a new brochure for the Betsy-Tacy sites in Mankato - *Discover Deep Valley: Visit the Betsy-Tacy Places in Mankato*. This colored tri-fold brochure highlights the Betsy-Tacy sites in Mankato along with a detailed map. The brochure was created and written by Julie Schrader, design and layout by Barbara Bjelland, and printing donated by Navitor. If you would like a copy, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the Betsy-Tacy Society, P.O. Box 94, Mankato, MN 56002-0094.



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the end of the envelope and peered within, she might add, nonchalantly, "No; I thought it was too fat for 'Lavender.' It's 'Roses and Rue.' Really, mamma, if I didn't have such a sweet spirit, I would snub those people when I get famous."

Ah, no! So commonplace an occurrence as the return of a manuscript would not have had the power to impel Victoria to that rash declaration, to force her to tear her papers straight across and stuff them viciously into a neighboring waste-basket or to fling her pretty head into her round white arms on the-unsympathetic and highly polished surface of her desk.

The morning had begun auspiciously. She had been awakened by the regular beat of rain upon the roof. It was a thoroughly businesslike rain, and it had put her at once into the most commendably industrious humor. There was a certain severe head-dress that she affected when she wrote and a gown with intellectual-looking linen cuffs and collars which provided her enormous satisfaction. Both of these had made their appearance at breakfast and had impressed the family to a gratifying degree. Father had asked if her typewriter was satisfactory. She deserved the best of everything, by George! Mother had insisted on her eating a second egg. Brain-work is so wearing. Little Brother had hinted that his aeroplane lacked a very vital organ. Victoria had thought that when her check came she might be able to provide it. It was a gift from above. She had left definite orders not to be called to the telephone or interrupted in any way, and she had gone up to her room and seated herself quietly at her desk.

At that point the trouble had begun. Having slapped down her pad and selected a pencil and assumed an attitude irreproachably thoughtful, she had been confronted by the embarrassing revelation that she didn't have anything to write.

I cannot venture to describe the distractions that presented themselves to her. She was the proud possessor of an artistic temperament which did double duty that morning.

"I'll scrub floors! I'll teach school! I may even get married! Oh, Lord!" said Victoria Wren Anderson.

It being a Saturday, Little Brother was at home, and the weather keeping him indoors, he was seated at the dining-room table amid a cheerful boyish litter, when he heard Victoria's step upon the stair.

He called out jovially, "Hello there, Miss Laura Jean Libby!" But when she appeared in the doorway—"Ma!" he bawled as desperately as fear would permit.

Victoria's lovely twist of hair, which was wont to stand proudly erect, drooped sullenly over one ear. The print of an inky finger on her eyelid gave her the appearance of having been struggling with something more tangible than the muses. The scowl on her features gave no suggestion of their usual amiable expression, and she bent beneath the weight of her typewriter.

"My darling girl!" cried Mrs. Anderson, flying into the room. "Where are you taking that typewriter?"

"Down cellar," said Victoria, briefly, and stalked grimly past them in the direction of the door.

This was so very explicit that there were obviously no questions to be asked. They waited in palpitating silence until she reappeared. Without so much as glancing at them, she tramped back up the stairs to her room. Her step was resolute, her whole aspect forbidding. Presently she marched down again, both hands full of papers. She walked straight to the grate where a fire was crackling hungrily and threw them viciously into the greedy flames.

"Victoria," quavered her mother, "they weren't—manuscripts?"

"They were," said Victoria

succinctly.

This time they followed her up the stairs, staring at her in fascinated silence. She flounced into her room, crossed to the window and threw it open, admitting a rush of chill damp air. She returned to her desk, gathered up by its four corners the square of green felt which covered it, and as the ink bottles, pens and pencils which had been scattered upon it met with a discordant jangle in the center, she rushed with it across the room and hurled it far out into the rain.

"What—what—why?" protested Mrs. Anderson, rather feebly.

Victoria flopped down in the center of the room. She removed her little pumps and banged them at her desk, which with its dismantled board presented a pitiful spectacle. With loosened hair and burning cheeks and eyes which seemed a trifle moist, she looked up at her awed and anxious family.

Mrs. Anderson melted into a chair.

"It's madness!" she sobbed.

Little Brother broke into uproarious laughter.

"It's artistic peppermint!" he shouted. At this juncture, the telephone rang. Little Brother, the only one with any equipoise, tore down-stairs to answer it. Mrs. Anderson revived sufficiently to shut the window and hand Victoria her pumps. Even Victoria lifted her stricken head. And then Little Brother's clear voice floated up to them.

"If you could see her now, you wouldn't want to speak to her," he was confiding. "She looks more like Mrs. Pankhurst than Miss Libby this morning."

Victoria pulled on her pumps, scrambled to her feet and was off down the stairs, taking them two at a time.

"Do you want to be disturbed to talk to Harley Cox?" asked Little Brother politely, as she breathlessly approached.

"I'll disturb you!" snapped

Victoria, dabbing at her eyes.

For Harley Cox is—well, Harley Cox. I think that Victoria had him in mind when, in the depths of her despair, she admitted that she might be driven into matrimony. But, having accepted the receiver, she burst into laughter.

"What's the matter with the Anderson family this morning?" inquired Harley Cox.

"The household god has been shattered," replied Victoria gayly. "Come on out and help pick up pieces."

"Are you going to stick it together again?"

"Into something or other."

"What, for instance?" he urged with some curiosity.

"Oh, a debutante or a vaudeville favorite or a Red Cross nurse. There are infinite possibilities. But never a lady writer again."

"It dawns on me," said he, "and it could be made into the most charming little wife—"

"I wonder—" mused Victoria.

"May I try?"

"It would be interesting."

"Perhaps you'd lunch with me?"

"I'd love to."

"I'll be right out. You're lost this time," cried Harley Cox ecstatically.

"Mercy me!" said Victoria saucily, and hung up the receiver.

Rushing up-stairs again, she fell upon her mother with an onslaught of kisses, in which she was joyfully joined by Little Brother, whose kisses were characterized by feeling rather than delicacy.

Extracting herself, she went whistling and fox trotting across the room with the sprightly smile of one who would beguile an audience, Little Brother capering wildly beside her.

"We will fling a rug luxuriously across that desk," she proclaimed, stopping suddenly to

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point at it, “and litter it with six best sellers and five-pound boxes of chocolates.”

“But, Victoria, you have written since you could hold a pencil,” put in Mrs. Anderson plaintively, “and we have all been so proud of you.”

“Proud of me! Have you?” asked Victoria, dashed for the moment. “But, mamma, you’ve always wanted me to come out. Maybe I’ll do that!”

“Oh, Victoria, that would be nice,” conceded Mrs. Anderson. “Which should we have, a dance or a tea? Young people always like dancing, I know, but there is something very conservative about a tea; don’t you think?”

“I loathe teas, but I submit,” said Victoria airily. “Which suit shall I wear, mamma? The green one with fitch fur? I’m going to lunch with Harley.” And Victoria stepped out of the gown with the intellectual-looking linen cuffs and collars, slipped into a gaudy kimono, placed a handful of bone hairpins on the dressing-table and, seating herself, shook down a wealth of brown hair.

“Lunch with Harley? Why didn’t you say so?” demanded her mother in some irritation. “Sometimes you talk very queerly, Victoria. But then, you literary women—”

“Literary!” expostulated Victoria, flinging down her brush. “Pardon my vehemence, but you try me beyond endurance. Who is literary, pray?”

“I think your gray velvet is the more becoming, Victoria,” ventured her mother mildly. “Somehow, it suits your style better.”

“But no one knows what my style is,” replied Victoria argumentatively, as she twisted up her hair and poised her head to get the effect. “Jinks! I look like Mary Pickford.”

“Go into the movies, Vic! Go into the movies!” shouted Little Brother. “I’ll be a cowboy and

you be an Indian. Aw, come on! Can we, ma?”

“Wren,” said Victoria soulfully, “you have sympathy! You have understanding! In vulgar parlance, you get me! Come to my bosom!”

“Oh, ain’t that swell, ma?” shrieked Little Brother, renewing his joyful leaps.

Mrs. Anderson, just emerging from the closet with her arms full of green cloth and fitch fur, included them both in a disapproving glance.

“You must get it from your father’s side,” she remarked severely. “There is no insanity in the Wren family.”

But Victoria was irrepressible—and irresistible, too, it must be confessed. She was flushed, laughing, scornful, radiant, luminous. Amid the confusion of their departure, Harley Cox kept looking at her. And as soon as the door of the limousine had closed upon them he turned toward her.

“Victoria,” he said quite suddenly and soberly, “marry me to-day!”

Victoria slipped her hand contentedly under his arm.

“Oh, not to-day,” she protested, drawing in her breath in mock alarm. “It’s raining.”

“‘A Dark Marriage Morn,’ by Bertha M. Clay,” he observed gloomily.

“But it’s not only raining; it’s unpropitious generally.”

“Yes?” he suggested gently.

“The time to get married is a time when you are bored,” proclaimed Victoria. “I never was less bored in my life!”

He leaned forward and looked out of the window. It had stopped raining, but a few drops still clung to the pane like tears to the cheek of a child.

“This is my Wonderful Day,” she went on softly. “As mamma just told me, I have written since I could hold a pencil. And that means that I always have had a course laid out for me. I always

have been going to be a writer. It is a if I had lived all these years in a cell and had just broken out of it,” she explained dreamily, leaning back in her corner and resting her long dark lashes on her round pink cheek. “And now I am wandering all through the house and tempting myself with telling myself that I can live in any room I want to.”

“I suppose the one labeled ‘Harley Cox, Husband,’ comes next to ‘Queen of the Movies.’ “

“I believe it does,” cried Victoria, opening sparkling eyes.

“I am very unreasonable to be depressed by the prospect.”

“On the contrary,” she replied enigmatically, “you are the most reasonable man I know.”

There is always a charm in lurching down-down, and they went to one of Victoria’s very pet places. She confided to Harley Cox that she was foolishly, fatuously, extravagantly, exuberantly, improbably and impossibly happy.

“You remind me of the little girl with the little curl,” he replied, when they had confided their secret longings to the waiter, and he had set about to gratify them. “But you are not only the goodest person in the world when you are good, and the baddest when you are bad. When you are happy it is with the happiest happiness that ever went unpatented.”

Victoria shrugged.

“I was condemned to a life of writing, and my sentence has been revoked,” she said lightly.

“But you never impressed me as being a prisoner,” he rejoined, looking at her in a puzzled way.

“Yet I was a prisoner,” she insisted, pouting, “to ideas and ideals and all sorts of stupid things.”

“Somehow you made me understand that writing was a most entertaining occupation,” he said meditatively, after a moment.

“Entertaining!” scoffed Victoria.

The orchestra burst into music.

Harley Cox looked at her across the shimmering damask and shining silver and nodding flowers. His eyes held hers. Something passed between them, something indefinable. She blushed faintly. For some unreasonable reason he was closer to her than he had ever been before. It was a moment to be remembered always. Then the waiter approached and served the luncheon. Their next remark concerned seasoning. “There is a very pretty girl at that table in the corner,” remarked Victoria, a few minutes later. “There is a very handsome man at this table of ours, as far as that is concerned,” responded Harley Cox indifferently.

“But—” began Victoria and put down her fork. She was looking steadfastly across the room.

“But what?” he persevered, amused.

“But what does she make you think of?” continued Victoria slowly, her gaze still fixed, her head on one side, her hands in her lap. “That pure profile—outlined against that rose-colored curtain—she reminds me of something.”

Harley Cox turned and took a casual survey.

“It’s a cameo. Isn’t it?”

“Oh, yes,” said Victoria. Her voice sounded a trifle breathless.

“As an acknowledgment of my valuable assistance, you might direct your attention towards me,” observed Harley Cox, after he had waited a reasonable length of time.

She turned back to him with visible reluctance. Her eyes had a clouded look. He recognized it with vague irritation, but attempted to ignore it. “How do you feel about a *matinée*? If you would like one, I had better telephone for tickets.”

“Yes,” said Victoria absently. She had picked up her fork, but was merely toying with it.

“Yes what? Should I?” he persisted, much annoyed.

“Should you what?” she asked

dreamily.

"Should I what?" he repeated in vexation. "Should I telephone for tickets?"

"For—" Suddenly she dropped her fork and clasped her hands over her eyes.

"What is it?" he cried in a startled voice.

The face she lifted was radiant. "The Cameo Girl!" she announced triumphantly.

His fears had been confirmed. "The Cameo Girl?" he fenced.

"Don't you see what a title that is?" she demanded indignantly. "Breathes there an editor with soul so dead that he wouldn't read a story called 'The Cameo Girl?'"

"What's that to you?" asked Harley Cox, but he knew only too well.

She did not deign to answer him. With an impatient gesture, she pushed aside her plate and drew towards her the menu card and the freshly-sharpened pencil which lay with it. "I'm outlining it," she explained hurriedly, without looking up. "It will be in a restaurant like this one. He will notice her and fall in love with her. The Cameo Girl! But she goes out of his life, of course. And he cannot recognize her without seeing her in that same setting. And—" She paused, brought her hands up to her hot cheeks, stared down at the card with shining eyes.

"Victoria," said Harley Cox in the tone one uses in speaking to a misguided child, "you are a little excited. That is really a very stupid plot."

She ran her fingers up into her hair, then twisted them nervously together in her lap.

"It's because I can't explain it to you," she cried tremulously. "I can see it all, and it is fascinating—compelling. I can write it, too! I can write it! Oh, I wish I was at home! It will be the best thing I have ever done, by far the best thing I have ever done! It will make my name for me! There is no doubt about it!"

"My dear," he remonstrated, "I have heard you talk that way over a dozen very ordinary stories." "But this is different," she assured him. She was so sweet, so earnest, so moved, that he could not even be angry. "Oh, Harley, I have worked so long! I have tried so hard! I have waited—and now it has come! You won't let me lose it, will you? Just because I am here? You will take me home, won't you? For you are the understanding kind."

"We will go at once," said he.

While he waited for his check and paid the waiter, she bent again over the card. A loosened waving strand lay across her flushed cheek. Her eyes were very wide and there was a little smile on her lips. When he touched her arm, she rose obediently, clinging to the precious card, but remembering nothing else, and he gathered up her softly crumpled, faintly scented handkerchief and the white gloves, which still retained the shape of her slim fingers. She followed him out to the limousine, walking like one in a dream. She was childlike, sweetly docile, but infinite spaces away from him. It was odd. She had moods when she was stormy, moods when she was gay, moods when she was piquant, and into all of them Harley Cox could enter. But this mood when she was dreamy excluded him utterly, and, with the inconsistency of his sex, he found it the most appealing of them all.

When the limousine drew up before her home, she opened the door for herself, climbed out unaided and walked swiftly up the steps to the house. As she burst in, her mother was just emerging from the dining-room. "Oh, it's you, is it, dear?" she began hurriedly. "I was wishing you were here. I wanted to consult you. Whom would you prefer to have assist?"

"Oh, mamma," said Victoria breathlessly, shaking out of her coat, which dropped to the floor behind her, "the Cameo Girl!"

"Who?" ejaculated Mrs. Anderson. "I never heard of her.

How queer you act, Victoria? Did you have a good time?"

Victoria jerked off her hat, jabbed the pins back with a reckless disregard of the new holes she might be making, flung it into the nearest chair and started for the stairs.

"Oh, perfectly wonderful, mamma! I will put a little note at the end of it, saying that I won't consider less than five hundred dollars. I—"

"Oh, where is Harley?" wailed Mrs. Anderson, wringing her hands.

"Here I am," replied Harley Cox leisurely, appearing in the doorway. "We came home early, because Victoria had an idea for a very novel story which she wanted to begin at once."

"Oh, so novel, mamma!" put in Victoria from the landing, jumping up and down in her excitement. "Her nose was fairly chiseled out of marble. I must get to work immediately. You'll come again, won't you, Harley?" she called out as she disappeared.

"I suppose," he answered slowly, "that I am just that big a chump."

"She has changed her mind again," said Mrs. Anderson in complete bewilderment.

"It seems so," returned Harley Cox with feeling.

"She is so clever," sighed her mother, as she picked up the hat and coat.

"She is very clever," agreed Harley Cox, putting the handkerchief and gloves stealthily into his pocket.

"Mamma! Mamma!" shouted Victoria from above. "Where is my typewriter?"

"Why, my dear girl, don't you remember, you took it down-cellar yourself?" responded Mrs. Anderson conciliatingly.

"Then where is my pencil? Where is my pen?" she cried, almost sobbing. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Why, you threw them out of the window, darling, but I will come—"

"I'm crazy!" stormed Victoria. There was the sound of a bang. "Oh, Lord!" There was the sound of a second bang.

"Her pumps!" said Little Brother, dryly.

Mrs. Anderson and Harley Cox turned sharply. Little Brother, in full cowboy costume, leaned against the door. There was a cynical smile on his face.

"Take her my fountain pen, old man," said Harley Cox. "And then maybe you'll ride over to the drug store with me. I feel the need of an ice-cream soda."

Fires of Genius was written by Maud Palmer Hart and published in the February 1916 issue of Ladies World magazine. Illustration by George Brehm from the original publication of Ladies World magazine.

Maud Hart One Of The Prize Story Writers

Miss Maud Palmer Hart, a former Mankato girl, who **is meeting with considerable success as a writer of fiction, was one of the fortunate ten to receive \$100 prizes for short stories submitted to the Ladies World, a popular magazine. A prize story has been printed each month for several months past and Miss Hart's story, entitled "The Fires of Genius," appears in the February issue. It is a bright little story, and promises much for the future of the writer.**

Mankato Free Press - Jan. 15, 1916

Betsy's Beloved Vagabond

By Claudia Mills

When Betsy sets sail for the Great World, her traveling inspiration is Paragot, the protagonist of William J. Locke's 1906 novel *The Beloved Vagabond*. "I'm just going to travel around like Paragot," she tells Tacy. At dinner aboard the *S. S. Columbic*, conversation turns to Paragot's adventures. "Do you remember when he decided to go to Budapest, and just went, all of a sudden? That's the way I like to do things," Betsy declares. Another passenger at the table is less enraptured: "I wished he'd cut his nails. . . And I didn't like it when he put his hairbrush in the butter."

In Paris, Betsy makes a private pilgrimage to the Pont Neuf, to see the statue of Henri Quatre, remembering how "Paragot, with his world crashing around him, had gone to ask advice of the statue of Henri Quatre on the Pont Neuf. . . [and] how the kind had nodded and pointed to the Gare de Lyon." As she is about to leave Paris, she visits Henri Quatre one last time, hoping for "a little hint for how to get in touch with Joe again." Her delay from her detour to visit the king leads her to arrive at the American Express office just in time to encounter Mrs. Main-Whittaker, the author, who gives her a compliment about Joe that provides an excuse for her to write to him: "Henri Quatre had helped her at last!"

So who is Paragot? How did he end up in Budapest? Why is his hairbrush in the butter? And how does the advice he receives from Henri Quatre change his life?

The Beloved Vagabond is narrated by Paragot's ward and protégé Asticot, the London urchin whom he purchases from his disreputable, drunken mother for half a crown. Although Paragot claims that he adopted Asticot because he was "ugly, dirty, rickety, undersized, and underfed and wholly interesting," he is actually intrigued that the little boy has been reading *Paradise Lost*: Asticot seems ripe for Paragot's unusual style of education, which chiefly involves listening to Paragot hold forth in endless conversation about everything from table manners to Greek mythology to Schopenhauer to Shakespeare. Asticot discovers that his hero has a tragic secret, a long-distant, lost love for a woman named Joanna, whose tiny feet Paragot adored. It is when the romance with Joanna came to an abrupt and mysterious end that Paragot conferred with the status of Henri Quatre, whose alleged nod toward the Parisian train station with departures for Italy sent Paragot upon his life as a "vagabond philosopher."

With Asticot, Paragot travels to Paris, and then around France. In the city of Nancy, he presents himself at the railway station asking only for "a ticket." When the bewildered clerk asks, "To

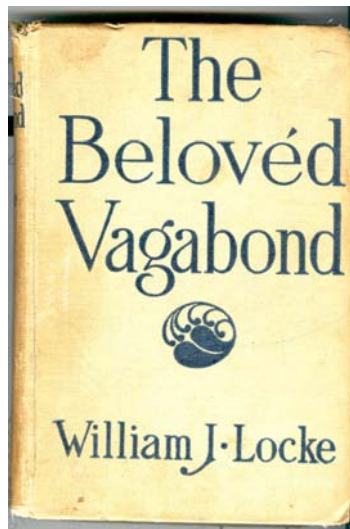
what destination?" Paragot responds with an oath: "Parbleu, to any destination you like provided it is not too expensive." Along the way they acquire two other traveling companions, an ugly dog named Narcisse and a homely woman named Blanquette, forming a band of traveling musicians. While they are playing at a restaurant one afternoon, Joanna appears in the audience: Asticot recognizes her after catching a glimpse of "the most delicately shaped, tiny foot that has ever been attached to woman." Shortly after, Paragot abandons the life of troubadour, suddenly realizing that he, Blanquette, and Asticot all loathe their instruments. "We should settle down for the winter," he tells Asticot. "Some capital. Which one would you like?" "Buda-Pesth," says Asticot, and so it is done.

Asticot grows up to be a successful artist; Joanna reappears; the reason for their tragic parting is revealed and resolved; the two have a second chance at love. But if Paragot marries Joanna, now the Comtesse de Verneuil, he will have to give up his wistful wanderings and adopt a life of reason and respectability. There will be no more late-night inebriated conversations, no more impetuous journeys to unknown destinations. Joanna may love Paragot dearly, but she is not about to tolerate hairbrushes in the butter. Paragot must make a choice.

The Beloved Vagabond is a celebration of Bohemian spontaneity. Paragot has many talents: he is an architectural genius, a violin virtuoso, a scholar in many languages, but his greatest masterpiece is the life he creates for himself. He educates Asticot in "the High

School of the Earth, the University of the Universe"; he refuses to submit himself to double-entry bookkeeping, "whereby human aspirations are cribbed within ruled lines and made to balance on the opposite side." He is content so long as he has "two sous for bread and two to throw to a dog." When told that "Usually people travel with their luggage," he replies, "They are usual people, my son. I am not one of them."

Paragot's spirit resonates in the artistic communities Betsy finds for herself in Europe, both at her pension in Munich and her boardinghouse in London, where singers, writers, and artists mingle together sharing their creative dreams. Paragot appears in a less likeable form in the character of Rocky in *Betsy's Wedding*, the arrogant tramp newspaperman who travels wherever he pleases, riveting the Violent Study Club with his erudite conversation. Like Paragot, Rocky prefers the education of the University of the Universe: "He never went to college, but he's read everything. He came in yesterday with Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum* under his arm." And



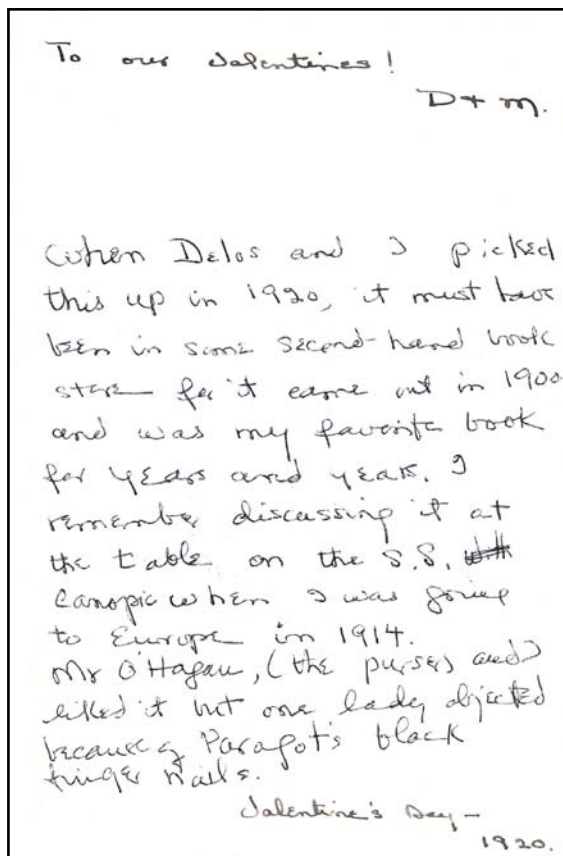
Maud & Delos Lovelace's copy of *The Beloved Vagabond* is on display at Tacy's House.

like Paragot, Rocky falls in love with a woman with adorably tiny feet: sitting down on the couch, he “swung Tib’s tiny feet to the floor,” drawing, “There aren’t two tinier feet in the world.”

Paragot must make an agonizing choice between his first love and the confining domesticity she represents and his own Bohemian creative identity. The deep satisfaction of Betsy and Joe’s married life is that they are not forced to make a similar choice. They can be both writers and lovers. Betsy can make a company dinner of scalloped potatoes cooked with ham and also scribble through the night on her short stories. She can explore the

Great World with the beloved vagabond at her side, and then return home to the arms of her own beloved Joe.

Claudia Mills is the author of many children’s books, most recently *The Totally Made-Up Civil War Diary of Amanda MacLeish* (Farrar, 2008), in which Amanda can be found reading a Betsy-Tacy book and proposing to her puzzled family that they have onion sandwiches one night for supper.



This inscription is found in Maud’s copy of *The Beloved Vagabond*:

To our Valentines!
D & M
Valentine’s Day — 1920

Some time later Maud inscribed the following: When Delos and I picked this up in 1920, it must have been in some second-hand book store for it came out in 1900 and was my favorite book for years and years. I remember discussing it at the table on the S.S. Canopic when I was going to Europe in 1914. Mr. O’Hagen, (the pursers aid) liked it but one lady objected because Paragot’s black finger nails.

Maud’s Father Expert Witness at Trial

By Susan Hynes

Events leading up to what is considered by many to have been the most sensational trial in the history Blue Earth County took place in Mankato, Minnesota during Maud Hart Lovelace’s Junior and Senior years in High School. Maud’s father, Thomas W. Hart, had a significant role in the outcome of that controversial trial.

Grace Lebeter, the accused, drove a bay horse that was fleet of foot. In earlier years the vivacious young woman was deemed a daredevil by the citizens of Redwood Falls, Minnesota where she seemed to attract considerable attention by her dress and manner. As one resident told a Mankato Free Press reporter: “Everyone knew when Mrs. Ledbeter was in town. She would drive into the city several times a day, and the way she would make that horse step over the ground was a caution. She made the boys who stood on the street corners daily take notice.” Grace had been just 17 when she married 36 year old Holland Ledbeter in 1894. Holland was quiet hardworking man who tilled the soil and accumulated a considerable amount of worldly goods. Grace was a young woman possessing a pretty face and a fine form. They lived for thirteen years in Redwood Falls. During that time it was common talk in the town that many a night found Mrs. Ledbeter away from her husband and four children. While they slept soundly it was said that she would be out riding with a gentleman friend until one or two o’clock in the morning. People declared that Mr. Ledbeter did not know of these clandestine rides and some made the suggestion that she drugged him.

In 1908 the Holland Lebeter family moved to a farm just outside of Maud’s hometown of Mankato, Minnesota. Soon Grace would attract even more attention than she had as a young woman in Redwood Falls. Her husband Holland went missing on May 5, 1909. In the months that followed newspaper coverage ignited rumors of intrigue and wrongdoing that swept through the Minnesota River valley like wildfire. On June 27th a search party found Holland Lebeter. He had been murdered. His body buried in a field on his own farm. A blow to the back of the head was the cause of death. The hired man, Frank Smith was immediately

continued on page 10



Blue Earth County Courthouse circa 1890

suspected. He said that he only buried Ledbeter and that Grace Ledbeter had killed her husband while he slept and then ordered Smith to conceal the body. Smith also implicated Grace's sister and brother-in-law, Goldie and William Schwandt, saying they had helped move and bury the body. All four were arrested.

Frank Smith was tried and found guilty of murder in the first degree. The Deputy Warden of Illinois State Prison positively identified Smith as one Frank Lavendoski, a career criminal previously convicted of two separate charges of forgery.

Grace, held without bail for six months away from her fatherless children, hung lace curtains in her jail cell. During her time behind bars she was, in many ways, tried in the court of public opinion. The July 6, 1909 Mankato Free Press read: "Mrs. Grace Ledbeter has a past. She brazenly betrayed the confidence of a most indulgent husband and made his honest name a by-word. She made food for the idle gossips and her scandalous and heartless conduct the cause of a flood of talk in the town where she once lived."

The trial of Grace Ledbeter took place at the Blue Earth County Courthouse in Mankato, Minnesota. The beautiful Minnesota limestone landmark stands just as it did during Maud's girlhood two blocks from 428 South Fifth Street where the Hart family home once stood. The 121 year old ornate statue of Lady Justice sits atop its lofty copper dome holding the scales of justice. The original scales fell and went missing in 1909. The actual cause was never determined. Some said the copper around the hand loosened allowing water to pass through and rust the hand. Some blamed high winds. The most interesting theory is that when the verdict in the trial of Grace Ledbeter was announced the scales fell from the hand of Lady Justice never to be found. They were finally replaced with a new set of scales in 1975.

Grace Ledbeter's murder trial convened December 14, 1909. Judge A. R. Pfau, Sr. presided. She had three defending attorneys, one of whom was the A. R. Pfau, Jr., son of the judge. The jury was comprised of men only, as were all juries of that era. The defense's contention that Ledbeter was awake when murdered was supported by the coroner's report of a large quid of chewing tobacco found in his mouth.

Thomas Hart, Maud's father, had been elected Blue Earth County Treasurer in the fall of 1904. He was called to the stand as an expert witness for the defense not in his capacity as Treasurer but based on his many years in business selling shoes. He had first gained experience in the shoe trade working five years for his father-in-law Chauncey Austin. In 1894 Hart opened his own boot and shoe store at 306 South Front Street. Seven years later he moved T. W. Hart Shoes to 403 South Front Street. Thomas Hart testified that the soles of the shoes found on the victim were compacted with mud and straw indicating that he would have already been up and about for the day and not killed in his sleep as claimed by Frank Smith. No physical evidence was ever found to show that a crime had been committed inside the Ledbeter home.

Maud Hart was at this time a seventeen year old Senior attending Mankato High School located just one block from the courthouse. From mid-December to New Years Eve, while Maud and her crowd enjoyed a festive round of skating, caroling, Christmas shopping, parties and dances, twelve men set out to determine the innocence or guilt of Grace Ledbeter. On December 31, 1909, New Years Eve, those men filed into the courtroom at exactly 4:10 pm having deliberated just about one hour. On the charge of murder in the first degree the jury found Grace L. Ledbeter not guilty.

Mankato newspapers continued to chronicle events surrounding the crime. The January 21, 1910 Mankato Journal carried an article showing statements made earlier by a witness, C. H. Miller, regarding an incriminating conversation he overheard in the jail between Grace Ledbeter and Frank Smith. He had been set to testify for the prosecution but right before the opening of the trial suddenly left for Iowa saying he had been called to the bedside of his very ill wife. He did not return to Minnesota until February 4, 1910.

The January 26, 1910 Mankato Review reported that over 600 citizens attended an "indignation meeting" to express their dissatisfaction at the result of the recent trial of Mrs. Grace Ledbeter for the murder of her husband.

Grace Ledbeter's case was taken before the Grand Jury. A second trial was considered but the county board decided it was not worth the expense as the chances of her conviction were slight. Reported to be penniless and in poor health she went to live with her aging father in Wisconsin. Rumors of her deathbed confession have never been substantiated.

Thomas Hart lost the election in his fourth run for County Treasurer in the autumn of 1910. The Hart family sold their home on Fifth Street and moved to Minneapolis. Maud would go on to travel the great world. The legacy of her books continues to enthrall readers drawn back to these earlier days in the Minnesota River valley town of Mankato.



Mankato Free Press, September 17, 1910

New Members

Every new member receives a new member packet which includes the most recent newsletters, a history of the Betsy-Tacy Society, Maud Hart Lovelace timeline, pencil and post-it notes and much more. With each new paid Lifetime membership you'll receive a hardcover copy of Winona's Pony Cart and a Lifetime Membership Certificate.

As a member of the Betsy-Tacy Society you will:

- Receive our newsletters.
- Free admission to special events
- Be part of an important effort to restore Betsy and Tacy's houses, historical literary landmarks in Mankato to educate future generations about the importance of the period.
- Be informed of all upcoming events

Great Gift Idea

Membership to the Betsy-Tacy Society makes a great gift for that special person on your gift list. With each paid gift membership, we'll send a new member packet and sign your name to a special card announcing your gift. Just fill out the membership form below with the recipient's name and mailing address and tell us how to sign your card.

When contacting the BTS....

By Mail - Always send mail to the following address:

Betsy-Tacy Society
P.O. Box 94
Mankato, MN 56002-0094

Do not use the address printed in the back of the Betsy-Tacy books and do not address mail to us at the Center Street location. We do not have a mailbox at either house and the mail carrier cannot deliver to these addresses.

By Email - When sending an email, ALWAYS use "Betsy-Tacy" in the subject line. This will help ensure your message does not get caught in spam filters.

By Phone - Our phone number - 507-345-9777 - reaches an answering service. Please leave your message and it will be returned by someone with the Society who can best help you.

Privacy Statement

The Betsy-Tacy Society is committed to respecting the privacy of our members. Please be assured that we do not rent or sell our mailing list. If you have any questions about your member information and how it is used, please contact us at membership@betsy-tacysociety.org or 507-345-9777.

Betsy-Tacy Society Membership Form

(Form may be photocopied)

First Name _____ Last Name _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

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Annual Membership Levels

Annual Membership with Email Newsletters

- \$15 Regular - E
- \$25 Patron - E
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- \$30 Foreign - E (Money order in US Funds only)
- \$200 Lifetime - E

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- \$25 Regular - P
- \$35 Patron - P
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Additional Information

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- Tax-deductible donation - Betsy-Tacy House Fund
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Please check here _____ if you would like your donation to be anonymous

Make checks payable to the Betsy-Tacy Society and send this form to: P.O. Box 94, Mankato, MN 56002-0094

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For membership office use only: Invoice # _____ Check# _____ Amount Paid _____ Date _____ N/M Packet sent _____

2008 Calendar of Events

July 12 **Tacy's Birthday Party**

Celebrate Tacy's 117th birthday! Special Guest: 2008 Minnesota Book Award Readers' Choice winner, Jill Kalz will read and sign copies of her award-winning book, *Farmer Cap*. Birthday cake and refreshments will be served.

Sept. 27 **Betsy-Tacy Neighborhood Walk**

Step back in time as you take a stroll through Betsy and Tacy's neighborhood. Costumed guides will lead the walk with stops at the homes of the Betsy-Tacy characters. At each home you will be greeted by costumed re-enactors.

Oct. 25 **Betsy & Tacy's Halloween Party**

Come to Tacy's House dressed in costume for our annual Halloween Party.

Dec. 6 **Tacy's Victorian Christmas**

Experience an old-fashioned Christmas. Costumed characters from the Betsy-Tacy books, dramatic readings from *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown* by Maud Hart Lovelace. Enjoy the sounds of Christmas with music from the MN Valley Chorale.

For detailed event information, visit www.betsy-tacysociety.org

Address Changes

Please remember to inform us if your mailing address changes. Most of our mailings are sent via bulk mail to save on postage costs and keep membership rates low. Bulk mail is not forwarded even when a change-of-address card is left with the post office.

Important Membership Information

You will find your expiration date on the mailing label. If you mailed your membership dues after May 31, 2008, the new expiration date will not be reflected on this mailing label. If your membership has expired, please consider renewing today! You are very important to us and we don't want to lose you as a valued member.



Betsy-Tacy Society

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www.betsy-tacysociety.org

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