St. Nicholas Magazine: A Portable Art Museum

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ST. NICHOLAS MAGAZINE: A PORTABLE ART MUSEUM

by

MARY FRANCES ZAWADZKI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2015
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

ST. NICHOLAS MAGAZINE: A PORTABLE ART MUSEUM

by

Mary Frances Zawadzki

Adviser: Professor Patricia Mainardi

In November 1873, St. Nicholas Magazine: Scribner’s Illustrated Magazine for Girls and Boys made its publishing debut. While it was intended to be a literary magazine, visual imagery was an important component of the monthly. Illustrations and reproductions of fine art and architecture from Antiquity, the Old Masters, and contemporary academic artists illustrated fictional serials, accompanied art historical information, and stood alone as art work for the reader to visually consider. Innovative page layouts took their inspiration from the aesthetic theories and art styles popular among those associated with the American genteel tradition. By choosing certain styles for illustration and page layouts, and by choosing to feature certain stylistic periods in the history of art, the editors of St. Nicholas attempted to train its readers in the acceptable taste associated with high culture, provide morally uplifting art that would inspire a proper Victorian American life, and train the upper and middle classes to become visual consumers.

I argue that St. Nicholas should be considered an art magazine specifically designed for the aesthetic training and art education of children, taking its place within the art and aesthetic
education movement of the late nineteenth-century. The art and aesthetic program was a complicated and premeditated agenda for the cultural education and visual training of America’s future citizens. By supplying children with reproductions of fine art, art historical essays, and illustrations and page layouts that parallel the styles and types of fashionable art, *St. Nicholas* provided children with the foundations of art education.
Acknowledgments

This study would not be possible without the support and help of numerous people. First and foremost, I could not have finished this dissertation — or my graduate coursework — without the unyielding support of my husband and best friend, Ed Moretti. Housekeeper, secretary, cheerleader, and sympathetic listener, Ed made sure that I had the peace, quiet, and time to accomplish what I set out to do. I thank him for the many cups of coffee in the wee hours of the morning, the huge amount of love he has for me, and his child-like silliness that kept me laughing throughout the process.

I also could not have done this dissertation without my advisor and mentor, Dr. Patricia Mainardi. Her unflinching belief in me and this project inspired me to continue “onwards and upwards” despite the many obstacles I faced during this process. Her thorough editing, brutal honestly, and thoughtful criticisms have made me a better writer and scholar; and her patience and kindness have made me a better teacher and person.

I would like to thank the staff at the New York Public Library, especially Jay Barksdale for giving me a residence at the Wertheim Center for Writers, Alvaro Lazo of the Prints and Photography Division for helping me decipher process printing in *St. Nicholas*; and the staff in the Rare Books and Archives division. I would like to thank Andrea Immel of the Princeton University Library, Children’s Book Division for her guidance, support, and wisdom, and the staff of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division of the Princeton University Library. I would also like to thank Susan R. Gannon and Ruth Anne Thompson for their generosity and helpful advice as they welcomed me to the “St. Nick Team.” Finally, I would like to thank my sister,
Elizabeth Zawadzki-Kelm, my father- and mother-in-law, Eddy and Bernadette Moretti, and my friends, Marcy and Mark Kobrak, for their support, understanding, and love during this process.

My mother, best friend, and biggest cheerleader, Carol A. Zawadzki (1940-2013), passed away in the middle of writing this manuscript. My love for learning, my determination to accomplish what I set out to do, and my confidence to do so stems from her love, nurturing, guidance, and encouragement. She taught me how to dream big and how to work hard to achieve those dreams. Most importantly, she taught me that the path least taken is usually the most worthwhile. Mom, this one’s for you!
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Introduction

In 1870, Roswell Smith and Dr. Josiah Holland embarked on a business venture that would transform publishing for children from a small, didactic subsidiary of adult publishing, into a modern, profitable, niche market that would have an undeniable influence on the future of children’s publishing. That same year, Smith, a lawyer and owner of coal-rich lands in Indiana, and Holland, an American poet and novelist, launched *Scribner’s Monthly: An Illustrated Magazine for the People* in partnership with Charles Scribner. With Holland as its first editor and Richard Watson Gilder as his assistant, the adult magazine was successful with the predominately upper, middle-class audience. This success prompted Smith and Holland to created a business plan for a new children’s magazine that would serve as a junior to their already popular illustrated adult periodical. With the well-known author, Mary Mapes Dodge, as its editor, *St. Nicholas Magazine: Scribner’s Illustrated Magazine for Girls and Boys* made its debut in November 1873 and would continue publication until 1940.

Like *Scribner’s Monthly*, *St. Nicholas* was intended to be a literary magazine whose content ranged from serial fiction, factual articles, poetry, and moralistic features, all of which were intended to guide, teach and entertain children.\(^1\) Also like its parent magazine, visual imagery was an important component of the monthly. Its publishers neither spared any cost in buying original art from fine artists and trade illustrators, nor in printing the lavishly illustrated monthly. While this does not seem incredibly outrageous to the modern reader who is accustomed to the copious amounts of colorful illustrations in children’s publishing,

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sophisticated illustrations and layouts in children’s magazines printed in America were almost unheard of before the mid-nineteenth century. Periodicals have had a long history in America; however, it was with the birth of the postbellum, illustrated literary magazines like *St. Nicholas* that the relationship between text and image found in modern children’s publications was solidified.

*St. Nicholas* occupies a very important place in the history of art, children’s publishing and visual culture in America. Its publication spanned seven decades and its importance in American art, literature and visual culture lies at least partially in its longevity. It was started at a time when illustrators were secondary to wood-engravers, when American artists were just beginning to return from their studies in Europe and demand their professional status, when publishing for children was still a small and unexplored area of publishing and book selling in America, and when American authors were only beginning to realize the potential of writing for children. In less than a decade and through the efforts of such illustrated literary magazines like *St. Nicholas*, this all changed. Illustrators and artists became celebrities, known in every household and adored by their fans, *because* of their work in magazines like *St. Nicholas*. Engravers embraced the “New School” of wood-engraving which strove to erase the hand of the engraver and keep the image true to the artist’s original intention. Art departments in large publishing houses experimented with photochemical processes that would replace manual reproduction methods with the camera, thereby making the profession of wood-engraving obsolete. Finally, authors like Frances Hodges Burnett and Louisa May Alcott, although originally writers for adults, realized the artistic potential in writing for children through the stories that they produced specifically for *St. Nicholas*. 
Leafing through the pages of *St. Nicholas*, the observer is immediately struck by the amount and quality of visual imagery that appeared throughout its publication. Not only were illustrations used to flesh out the written word, but they often stood alone as art work for the child to visually consider. Particularly striking are the reproductions of fine art and architecture from Antiquity, the Old Masters, and contemporary academic artists. These reproductions were often reproduced for their own artistic value, and accompanied art historical information or biographies of artists. For example, in April 1874 a reproduction of Edwin Landseer’s *Sleeping Bloodhound* of 1835 was accompanied by a short biographical sketch and his obituary (figure 1). Sometimes the reproduced art piece would illustrate a fictional serial, or stand alone as a frontispiece or single page.

The illustrations in *St. Nicholas* were done by the best-known artists of the time, some of whom were illustrators by trade and some of whom were painters who did illustration to supplement their incomes. Like the museums and galleries of the big cities, *St. Nicholas* touted art work from contemporary painters like William Merritt Chase, and artists who were known for both illustration and fine art production like Winslow Homer, John La Farge, Frederic Remington, and Kenyon Cox. It also contained the work of trade illustrators who would become famous through the distribution of illustrated magazines. A quick glance at a volume’s table of contents lists a veritable “who’s who” of late nineteenth-century American illustration. Names like Howard Pyle, William L. Sheppard, Edwin Abbey, Mary Hallock Foote, Jessie McDermott, Reginald Birch, and Addie Ledyard appear over and over throughout the volumes, only disappearing upon the death of the artist or a break with the magazine to pursue other endeavors. From the classicism of the American Renaissance found in Kenyon Cox’s work, to the Arts and
Crafts stylization of Katharine Pyle, illustrations were often done in fashionable styles popular in the American cultural circles of the Gilded Age.

The art in St. Nicholas was more than just the illustrations or the fine art reproductions, it was the magazine itself. Contained between the two heavy, matte paper covers were innovative and artistic layouts that consciously took their inspiration from the aesthetic theories and art styles popular amongst those associated with the international art scene and the American Genteel Tradition.

I argue that St. Nicholas should be considered an art magazine specifically designed for the aesthetic training and art education of children, taking its place within the art and aesthetic education movement of the late nineteenth-century. The impetus to start a lavishly illustrated magazine for children and the success of St. Nicholas was a result of several factors: the changing attitudes towards children and their education; a growing interest in the fine arts among the middle-classes; opportunities for training of American artists and trade illustrators; and advances in printing technology. Furthermore, St. Nicholas was the result of an editorial and publishing team whose individual members set the benchmark for excellence in their chosen fields.

The art and aesthetic program as defined by the editorial policies, and carried out by the magazine’s art department and printer, was a complicated and premeditated agenda for the cultural education and visual training of America’s future citizens. By supplying children with reproductions of fine art, art historical essays, and illustrations and page layouts that parallel the

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styles and types of fashionable art, *St. Nicholas* provided children with the foundations of art education. As Michael Patrick Hearn states, “Often one’s earliest introduction to art does not take place in a gallery or museum, but through a picture book…” *St. Nicholas*, therefore, can be considered a portable art museum, one that introduced children to their first art experience and that was specifically designed for art education.

The art and aesthetic education program in *St. Nicholas* is the direct result of the artistic and educational ideology of Dodge and of those who inspired and influenced her. *St. Nicholas* was also the result of two extremely influential men within the art and literary worlds, Alexander W. Drake and Theodore Low DeVinne. Both, with the help and contributions of their workers, illustrators, and engravers, established the look of the magazine. Their choices of style and artwork reflected their own understanding of and involvement in the art world and the desirable aesthetic preferences of the middle-class reading public. This combination of literary, visual, and editorial preferences in *St. Nicholas* provides an accurate depiction of the primary ideologies surrounding art and aesthetic education associated with the middle-class and the Genteel Tradition in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century.

This cultural ideology can be seen in the language associated with Dodge’s editorial practices, particularly those associated with the visual imagery and style of art work acceptable for the juvenile magazine. Dodge insisted that the images should not be crude or morally

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6 The term “portable art museum” is also used by Diane Korzenik in her book *Drawn to Art* to describe the scrapbooks made by the family that she studied. She argues that the scrapbooks were used by the family to learn how to draw. My definition of “portable art museum” differs since it refers to the reproduction of fine art and styles associated with nineteenth-century art in *St Nicholas Magazine*, and that was used for art education and appreciation.
questionable, and demanded that they be truthful and beautiful so to inspire and morally guide
the reader to proper, genteel behavior and thoughts. Her goal was to create a new kind of
magazine for children, one in which illustrations and art education were important foci, as seen
in her letter to Smith, published anonymously in *Scribner’s Monthly* in July 1873:

A child’s periodical must be pictorially illustrated, of course, and the pictures must have
the greatest variety consistent with simplicity, beauty, and unity. They should be heartily
conceived and well executed; and they must be suggestive, attractive and epigrammatic.
If it be only the picture of a cat, it must be so like a cat that it will do its own purring, and
not sit a dead, stuffed thing, requiring the editor to purr for it.\(^7\)

These words defined her editorial attitude towards illustration in children’s periodicals.
Her belief was simple -- illustrations for children must be easy to read, must prompt a child to
ask questions, must be witty and poetic, and above all must be beautiful. In addition, the
illustration must not be dull and must believably portray the subject matter it is illustrating.
Nowhere in this statement does Dodge indicate that the illustration be second to the text,
manipulated by the editor to speak for the author. On the contrary, the illustration should be
thought of as equal to the text that it accompanies and should even stand on its own for artistic
value.

Dodge’s letter became her official editorial policy regarding the art work found within the
pages of *St. Nicholas*. In a later document Dodge further outlined her editorial policy, stating
that the magazine was intended “To inspire them [children] with an appreciation of fine pictorial
art.”\(^8\) The same month that *St. Nicholas* made its debut, it was advertised in an unsigned
editorial in the pages of *Scribner’s Monthly*, stressing that the children’s magazine was to be

\(^{7}\) [Mary Mapes Dodge], “Children's Magazines,” *Scribner's Monthly* 6, no. 3 (July 1873): 353. See appendix for
complete letter.

\(^{8}\) As quoted in Cornelia Meigs, ed., *A Critical History of Children's Literature: A Survey of Children's Books in
“adorned with beautiful and costly pictures, it will be filled with contributions by the best writers...” and that “Wherever ‘Scribner’ goes, ‘St. Nicholas’ ought to go. They will be harmonious companions in the family, and the helpers of each other in the work of instruction, culture and entertainment. Here too, it is outlined that the magazine would contain “beautiful and costly pictures,” for both entertainment and culture. The amalgam of both visions created a new kind of illustrated magazine for children, one in which sophisticated art and literature would exist simultaneously with childlike merriment and whimsy.

The role of the images in St. Nicholas was indeed to acculturate, educate, and entertain. However, by choosing certain styles for illustration and page layouts, and by choosing to feature certain stylistic periods in the history of art, the editors of St. Nicholas actively trained the eye towards acceptable styles of visual imagery. These particular styles found in the pages of St. Nicholas were also found in the private collections and in the collections of museums, and were actively promoted by cultural elite. St. Nicholas taught the acceptable taste of the Genteel Tradition that would be reinforced through the various vehicles of culture, urban and park planning, and various cultural and educational endeavors. This visual training had three desired roles: to train its readers in proper and acceptable taste associated with high culture, while providing morally and spiritually uplifting art that would inspire the proper Victorian American life; to provide the lower-classes who had access to St. Nicholas via libraries, charitable gifts, schools, and churches with good and proper imagery that would influence them to moral and clean living through the contemplation of beauty; and to train the upper and middle classes to become visual consumers.

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Art and aesthetic appreciation and its purpose continued to be debated throughout the
nineteenth-century, weaving its way into the cultural discourse surrounding education and the
development of cultural institutions. By the early twentieth-century, these arguments were
transformed into what would become the Picture Study Movement, a curriculum-based initiative
that guided children towards good taste and proper morals through the appreciation of good art.10

*St. Nicholas* participated in this agenda throughout its long history by reproducing acceptable
fine art images and supplementing them with art historical information. Additionally, the actual
magazine and its illustrations were created within the cultural framework of the modern and
fashionable trends in art collecting, book production, and visual culture.

Within its first two years of publication, American poet John Greenleaf Whittier
proclaimed *St. Nicholas* to be “the best child’s periodical in the world.”11 Many modern scholars
have lauded *St. Nicholas* as being one of the greatest children’s magazines ever published.12 *St.
Nicholas* set the publishing standard for subsequent periodicals such as *Harper’s Young People:*
*An Illustrated Weekly* (1879-1899), even influencing the successful twentieth-century magazine,
*Cricket: The Magazine for Children* (1973-current).13 While *St. Nicholas* was neither the only
children’s magazine in the late nineteenth-century, nor the first magazine published for children,

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3 (January 1875), 1.
none of its competitors offered the quantity or quality of illustrations in *St. Nicholas*, nor could they claim the instant success and critical acclaim that greeted it.  

And yet, despite its popularity, influence and cultural and historical importance, *St. Nicholas* is mentioned only within larger studies of children’s publishing and has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. Critical scholarly work has been done primarily by literature scholars interested in the serialized stories that would eventually become American literary classics, such as Louisa May Alcott’s *Eight Cousins*. In 2004, a pioneering anthology on *St. Nicholas, St. Nicholas Magazine and Mary Mapes Dodge: The Legacy of a Children’s Magazine Editor*, was published, which considers the conception and growth of the magazine and the socio-cultural constructions within its literature. In one essay, Michael S. Joseph summarized the editorial methods by which Dodge solicited illustrations and the working methods of its wood-engravers. There is no discussion of the illustrations or artists of *St. Nicholas* or the visual layout of the magazine. The illustrations and illustrators featured in *St. Nicholas* have been briefly discussed in studies of American illustration or children’s illustration. Aside from a handful of unpublished dissertations, none of which deal with the magazine’s art and aesthetic educational program, a biography of Dodge authorized by her

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14 Others included, Hurd and Houghton’s *The Riverside Magazine for Young People* (1867-70), and Ticker and Fields, *Our Young Folk: An Illustrated Magazine for Boys and Girls* (1865-73), both of which were acquired by Scribner & Co. and folded into *St. Nicholas*; and *The Youth’s Companion* (1827-1928), whose goal was primarily to edify young readers along traditional Protestant, religious ideology.


16 Gannon, Rahn, and Thompson, eds.


family, and two popular anthologies drawn from its contents, there are no full-length studies of
the magazine.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite Dodge’s and Scribner’s goal to create an art magazine for children, the
illustrations, art department and aesthetic education program remain largely unstudied by art
historians. The majority of studies of American illustration have been recovery attempts written
by illustrators themselves. Initial critical attempts to establish an American canon of illustration
were made in the 1970s and 1980s by the Brooklyn Museum and the Santa Barbara Museum
cited above, yet no critical study of illustration and art education in \textit{St. Nicholas} has been
undertaken, especially ironic considering its important placement at the very forefront of the
American Golden Age of Illustration.

\textit{Scribner’s} and \textit{The Century’s} cultural education program has been well documented by
scholars, particularly by Arthur Johns and Mark Noonan.\textsuperscript{20} Despite the fact that \textit{St. Nicholas}
was part of the same publishing house as the adult magazine, and that it shared the same artists,
engravers, art department, and printer, scholars of \textit{St. Nicholas} have never followed the example
of Johns and Noonan and fully explored its role in cultural education. By ignoring the complex
and the sophisticated visual components within the pages of the \textit{St. Nicholas}, cultural historians
have missed an important opportunity to explore the manifestation of the art and aesthetic
education program within a popular magazine.

\textsuperscript{19} Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, 1-2.
\textsuperscript{20} Arthur John, \textit{The Best Years of the Century: Richard Watson Gilder, Scribner’s Monthly, and the Century
St. Nicholas’s Regular Features and Departments

The images found in St. Nicholas accompanied fictional and non-fictional articles, and a number of regular features and departments. Throughout Dodge’s editorship, only two departments, “The Letterbox” and “The Riddle-Box,” consistently appeared in each volume. “The Letterbox” contained letters from readers, young and old, from all over the world. In many letters, writers professed their adoration for St. Nicholas or described where they lived, their families, and their interests. “The Riddle-Box” contained a variety of word and image based riddles such as rebuses and rhyming puzzles.

Two departments, “Jack-in-the-Pulpit” and the “Little Folks Page,” appeared in the first issue, November 1873, and continued until the mid-1890s when they were replaced with other departments. “Jack-in-the-Pulpit” was written by Dodge, who used three fictional characters, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, the Little School Ma’am, and Deacon Green, to directly address her readers and to discuss miscellaneous topics like current events and science. These fictional characters shared a plot of land adjacent to the Little Red School House where children played and learned, and where birds and flowers gave Jack tidbits of information that he told to the readers. “Jack-in-the-Pulpit” occurred regularly until July 1889, after which it appeared sporadically until it disappeared in 1897 with volume twenty-four. Two possible reasons for its disappearance were that the editorial staff was making room for newer and fresher features, or that Dodge simply could not keep up with the monthly editorial demands because of her weakening health.21 “The Little Folks” page was a monthly feature that appeared in the first issue, continued until volume fifteen, reappeared in volume eighteen, only to end in volume twenty-six. This monthly

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21 Dodge suffered from an unidentified terminal illness. See chapter 3 for more information.
department featured simply written, illustrated stories set in large type that were geared towards the beginner reader.

Other departments and monthly features often appeared for a few volumes, perhaps because of a lack of space or readers’ interest. Some features, like “Books and Music for Young People,” were separated and expanded into new departments. Three popular departments, “Army of Bird Defenders,” “Young Contributor’s Page,” and the “Agassiz Association,” appeared within the first decade and lasted only a few volumes each. By 1900 and throughout the remainder of Dodge’s editorship, the departments and features were standardized. Alongside “The Letterbox” and “The Riddle-Box” were “Nature and Science,” “Books and Reading,” “Current Events,” and the extremely popular “St. Nicholas League,” which will be further discussed in chapter three.

The St. Nicholas Audience

The question of audience plagues every scholar of periodical publication because the intended audience as defined by the publishing company’s official prospectus and by its subscription prices often tells a narrow and incomplete story. Scribner & Co.’s official announcement for St. Nicholas as printed in the November 1873 number of Scribner’s Monthly stated:

As we have undertaken to make “Scribner’s Monthly” as good as labor and money can make it, so no pains will be spared to make the “St. Nicholas” the best juvenile that lives. It will be adorned with beautiful and costly pictures, it will be filled with contributions by the best writers, it will be edited by Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge. What more can be said of it, except to assure fathers and mothers and children everywhere that they will want it, and must have it. Wherever “Scribner” goes, “St. Nicholas” ought to go. They will be harmonious companions in the family, and the helpers of each other in the work of instruction, culture and entertainment.22

22 [Unsigned editorial], Scribner’s Monthly, 115.
Scribner’s Monthly was priced at $4.00 a year, $.35 a number, and St. Nicholas was priced at $3.00 a year, $.25 a number. At $3.00 a year for a subscription when $1,200 was a average income for a typical middle-class family, St. Nicholas Magazine was aimed at upper- and middle-class children whose families already subscribed to Scribner’s Monthly. A total magazine bill of $7.00 a year would be incredibly steep for the average middle-class family and completely unreachable for the lower classes.

However, the circulation and audience of St. Nicholas were neither dependent on subscriptions bought by people who could spare $3.00 a year, nor on those who could afford the costly bound volume at the end of the year. Letters found in the “Letterbox,” various editorial comments to features and letters, and editorial notes found in the archives tell a more complex story. While the “Letterbox” is filled with letters from privileged American children, many of whom lived in big cities or towns across the United States, it is also filled with letters from children who lived in far-flung military or missionary outposts and received St. Nicholas from wealthy family members “back east.” Additionally, letters from all over the world, some written by American expatriates or travelers, some by foreign children, are printed in the “Letterbox” and often contain colorful accounts of the people and culture of the country in which they live. More importantly, there are letters from underprivileged children, orphans, and child-laborers, who have access to St. Nicholas via church groups, schools, libraries, and the generosity of children and families who “gave up” their monthly for the “greater good” after reading it. This practice of giving read copies of St. Nicholas to orphanages, hospitals, and underprivileged families was encouraged by Dodge throughout her tenure as editor, and was echoed in the many

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letters found in the “Letterbox.” Arguably, this practice benefited the publishers economically. It enticed families to perform a charitable act by pleading to their moral consciousness, while creating a need to replace the year’s issues with a brand new, beautifully bound volume. It also increased the potential pool of subscribers who might not always be poor. In essence, this encouragement to help the poor and unfortunate resulted in families buying *St. Nicholas* twice. However, from a cultural standpoint, by sharing *St. Nicholas* with an audience who might not otherwise have access to the magazine, the privileged readers aided the stewards of culture in promoting their cultural agenda to those they truly wanted to educate. Copies were also eagerly shared among neighbors, friends, and classmates. Schools, churches, literary clubs, athenaeums, and most importantly, public libraries subscribed to or bought bound copies of *St. Nicholas.*

Subscriptions and individual monthly issues of *St. Nicholas* were sold by booksellers and dry goods stores. At $.25 an issue, the magazine was economically within reach of anyone who could save enough throughout the month. This was much more reasonable for a family that survived in a “hand-to-mouth” fashion and did not have enough savings to spend $3.00 all at once for a year’s subscription. For many child-laborers, buying a monthly copy of *St. Nicholas* was within their means, as seen in the 1883 letter from a sixteen-year old office worker, Josephine B., from Carpentersville, Illinois. According to her letter, she worked in an office as a secretary from eight o’clock in the morning until five or six o’clock in the evening, everyday. Her work duties and her domestic duties left her with very little time to read; however, she

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always found time to read the stories in *St. Nicholas*.27 Serialized versions of longer stories and features, and short articles found in the magazine were easily fit into the busy and structured schedule of the working classes.

Even though *St. Nicholas* was marketed towards children, it was intended not only for children. Susan R. Gannon makes this argument in her essay, “‘The Best Magazine for Children of All Ages’: Cross-editing *St. Nicholas Magazine* (1873-1905).”28 She points out that Dodge often directly addressed the parents or the adults reading *St. Nicholas* as an “in joke” that was exclusive to the older folks.29 Numerous letters written by young people who turned eighteen and who refused to give up *St. Nicholas*, and by adults who claimed to be “older children” who enjoyed reading “good ol’ *St. Nick*,” also demonstrate that the magazine was enjoyed by adults. By printing these letters and by directly addressing adult audience, the editor openly acknowledged the diversity of readers. Finally, the archives provide the most undeniable evidence that *St. Nicholas* was intended to be read by the entire family and not just the children.

The Century Company archive in the New York Public Library contains original manuscripts from 1871 through 1924. On many of these manuscripts is fastened a tag that was specifically printed for the editors of *St. Nicholas*. The tags feature spaces for the title of the article, what kind of feature it is, author’s name, information regarding illustrations, and a check box for whether or not it was accepted. Most telling is the list of various groups of readers within a traditional nuclear family structure — mother, father, family, older girl, older boy, youngsters —

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28 Gannon, 153-180.
29 Gannon, 156.
This indicates that Dodge intended *St. Nicholas*’s audience to be generationally inclusive even though it was promoted as being exclusive for children. Since it is well-documented that adults were reading *St. Nicholas*, it can be assumed that adult readers were reading the art and aesthetic educational features offered within its pages. While we do not have a record of what the adult reader thought about these features, we do have sporadic examples of adults actively interacting with the art in the magazine. One such example is found in a letter from a young reader, Mary Miller Mathews, from Lewisbury, West Virginia. In the letter, Mary explained that her mother cut some of the pictures out of the magazine to frame. This type of interaction with the printed image was not uncommon, particularly among those who could not afford original pieces of art.

To simply state that *St. Nicholas* was a gentry magazine geared towards middle- and upper-class youths from the ages of four to eighteen is to simplify a much more complex and diversified audience. This diversification is extremely important when combined with the various forms of art and aesthetic education found within the pages of *St. Nicholas*. An extended audience that included middle- and upper-class youths, lower class youths, and adults of all economic strata, allowed the editors and publishers of the magazine to promote their agenda across class, ethnic, and generational lines. By doing so, *St. Nicholas* participated in a larger cultural program that saw the creation of cultural institutions like museums and libraries for the education, acculturation, and refinement of “the masses.” Additionally, as discussed by Lawrence Levine in *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, the agenda promoted by cultural juggernauts like

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Charles Eliot Norton and Richard Watson Gilder established proper cultural rules of behavior for these institutions and successfully elevated art to the realm of “high culture.” As we shall see, *St. Nicholas* participated in this by featuring specific artists and important artwork established in the accepted canon of art, and by promoting contemporary artists and styles that were fashionable within elite circles. This select artwork would be carefully reproduced utilizing wood-engravings and later, halftones; and it would be accompanied by writing that would stress the history of the artists or artwork, the declarations of artistic genius, and the morality of beauty and truth located within the artist and artwork. The proper masterpiece combined with the acceptable language of cultural discourse trained the reader to distinguish which forms of art were culturally revered and why this was so. Most importantly, it was hoped that these features would inspire proper reverence to so-called “high art,” while inspiring the reader to good and moral behavior. This was especially important when considering the group of readers made up of the lower classes and the newly arrived immigrants. It is one thing to promote “high art” and acceptable artistic styles to a class of people who are already aware of them. The meaning and purpose changes when introduced to the lower classes and immigrant groups.

**Research Methodology**

*St. Nicholas Magazine* was published from November 1873 to 1940. This study encompasses the first thirty-two years of publication that were associated with the editorship of Mary Mapes Dodge (1873 to 1905). While *St. Nicholas’s* longevity makes for an interesting and comprehensive exploration of postbellum gentry publishing, illustration, printing techniques, and the development of children’s books and education, it also poses a tremendous challenge to the

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Taking into consideration that *St. Nicholas* was a monthly magazine with approximately one hundred pages that contained anywhere between thirty to sixty images each issue, this vast period encompasses a tremendous amount of visual information that needs to be sorted through and categorized in order to make sense of the art and aesthetic education program proposed by Dodge and its publishers.

There is no standard methodology associated with the study of periodicals or other printed popular materials. This is because of the newness of the field, its uncertain position in traditional academic disciplines, and its interdisciplinary nature. Perhaps more truthful is that the task of systematically reviewing decades upon decades of published material is daunting, challenging, and often times, disheartening. One can easily become overwhelmed by the amount of information within 384 issues of *St. Nicholas*, and one can easily get distracted by the entertaining stories, poems, and images within its pages. Adding to this herculean task is the long and twisted paper trail left by the publishing houses that weaves through a variety of archives, and that is hardly ever complete, leaving a scholar with more questions than answers.

The comprehensive study of the art and aesthetic educational program in *St. Nicholas* necessitated a thorough review of the visual components within the magazine, the materials from which it was made, and the printing processes. The methodology used for this study was quite archaic and simple; I systematically read through every volume of the magazine (1873 through 1905), noting artists, engravers, types of illustrations, and any changes that might occur in the layout, type face, printing processes, and materials. I also noted the predominant artistic styles of both the illustrations and layout, and related them to the predominant artistic styles and types popular at the time. Although time consuming, it was imperative to systematically review each
individual issue, to note any changes to the layout, printing techniques, or material object, and to place the imagery within the larger visual culture of the period. This methodology resulted in a complete material history of St. Nicholas’s printing techniques and physical development. It also provided invaluable documentation of the illustrators and engravers who were associated with the magazine, particularly those who have been overlooked by art historians. Most importantly, this methodology provided visual proof that Dodge and the publishers participated in the discourse associated with art and aesthetic education in postbellum America. By categorizing the types and styles of illustrations and fine art work reproduced, the styles of headpieces, tailpieces, fonts, and historiated letters, and the styles of layouts, it is possible to link St. Nicholas to the art collecting practices in American, to the larger art movements associated with Gilded Age, to the discourses surrounding proper cultural experiences and education, and to the fashionable styles of modern design.

Chapter Outline

The following chapters explore the role that St. Nicholas played in art and aesthetic education in nineteenth-century America, and the methods used by those who produced the magazine to make it a portable art museum. Chapter one outlines the history of art and aesthetic education in America. Starting with the debates surrounding the acceptance and necessity of art in the new nation, this chapter traces the various national discourses in the late nineteenth-century and the Genteel Tradition. Placing St. Nicholas firmly within the parlor tradition of self-education and self-refinement, I demonstrate how St. Nicholas was an important tool to those who believed that beautiful and proper art could inspire its audience to good, moral behavior. It was also believed that the inclusion of the reproductions of fine art and the use of the styles
associated with the American Renaissance would lead to the cultivation of taste in the magazine readers. As a result, *St. Nicholas* would aid in cultivating a proper, national taste necessary to compete on an international stage.

The history of *St. Nicholas* and its place within the history of children’s publishing is discussed in chapter two. Dodge and those involved in creating such a finely illustrated magazine were able to do so only because the attitudes towards children and their education changed in the nineteenth-century. Childhood was no longer viewed as a time of depravation that required harsh, religious training with the hope of saving children’s already tainted souls. By the time *St. Nicholas* was published, childhood was a protected time when children were taught moral goodness by good example and proper inspiration. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates that *St. Nicholas* was also only possible because of the people involved in its creation and because of where it was published, New York City.

In chapter three, Mary Mapes Dodge, William Fayal Clarke, Roswell Smith, and their importance to the content and production of *St. Nicholas* are discussed. Most importantly, this chapter explores the influences and social connections in Dodge’s life that shaped her views on art and aesthetic education. I stress the crucial influence that her father had on her ideology concerning children’s education and publishing, and art in America. This chapter also discusses how Dodge was able to maintain her editorial vision throughout her thirty-two years as editor by thoroughly training her editorial staff, especially her assistant Clarke, in her vision. Finally, I argue that *St. Nicholas* was only possible because of the financial security and the business acumen of Roswell Smith.
Along this same trajectory, chapter four discusses the important contributions made in the production of *St. Nicholas* by Alexander W. Drake, the superintendent of the art department for Scribner/Century, and Theodore Low DeVinne, the exclusive printer for Scribner/Century. Drake’s and DeVinne’s technical advancements and experimentation, and their insistence on perfection for the visual and material components of the magazine were pivotal in creating such a lavishly illustrated magazine. This is especially true for the superior reproduction of fine art and architecture within the pages of *St. Nicholas*. However, their influence on *St. Nicholas* and the art and aesthetic education program does not stop here. Like Dodge, both men were involved in the art world of the late nineteenth-century and were deeply entrenched in the cultural circles that promoted art and aesthetic education for Americans. This chapter explores how their own artistic professionalism and their involvement in the cultural landscape of the late nineteenth-century helped shape the art and aesthetic education program in *St. Nicholas*.

Chapter five expands the discussion of the technology and materials used by Drake and DeVinne to produce *St. Nicholas*. It is important to understand the methods, experiments, and materials used to create this magazine because the material object itself is what transports the art and aesthetic program into the homes of its readers. Furthermore, the exploration into the production of the magazine reveals the publisher’s serious commitment to producing a visually engaging magazine.

Finally, examples of the art and aesthetic education program are discussed in chapter six. Starting with an in-depth discussion of the cover designs of the individual numbers and the bound volumes, this chapter traces the art and aesthetic education program initiated by Dodge,
Drake, DeVinne, and the publishers that resulted in copious examples of fine art reproduction, art historical features, illustrations, and artistic page layouts.

Utilizing letters and testimonials from readers, the conclusion demonstrates how *St. Nicholas*'s audience interacted with the visual components of the magazine and discusses whether the intended cultural program worked.
Chapter 1: *St. Nicholas Magazine and Art and Aesthetic Education in America*

This chapter addresses the trends and issues surrounding art and aesthetic education in nineteenth-century America, specifically *St. Nicholas’s* crucial role in the various national objectives. Its large monthly print run, wide-spread distribution, and diverse audience demonstrates that *St. Nicholas* was widely read. This is especially important considering how essential art was to the editorial focus of the magazine. Through the distribution of *St. Nicholas*, contemporary artistic styles and reproductions of fine art made their way into the households of its readers. This audience included those readers who might not not have had the opportunity to buy art, or to experience art in the growing number of cultural institutions found in American cities, or to see art on trips abroad. *St. Nicholas* provided anyone who had access to it the opportunity for cultural and aesthetic education. As such, *St. Nicholas* must be considered as part of the parlor tradition as described by Louise Stevenson in her book *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880*. Stevenson argues that the inculturation of Americans was predominately by individual choice and that this kind of self-education was the hallmark of a national parlor tradition. Furthermore, she argues that instead of culture becoming more exclusionary, magazines like *St. Nicholas* made cultural learning available to anyone who had access to them.¹

This method of self-education would prove invaluable to the promoters of art and aesthetic education in America. The democratization of art that began with the antebellum art-unions logically continued with the postbellum, illustrated magazines. Like the art-unions, the goal of magazines like *St. Nicholas* was to provide examples of good art to its readers with the

intention of elevating their taste, which, in turn, elevated the national taste. As discussed below, the creation of a refined national taste and a preference for good art were essential to the establishment of the new nation. It was believed that a nation without a sophisticated culture was not a nation of merit, worth, or morals. For many statesmen and harbingers of culture, art and aesthetic education was as important to the new republic as the doctrines of government.

In theory, the parlor tradition provided all Americans who desired an education a chance to gain one. As such it became a powerful tool for those with a specific cultural agenda to attempt to mold the reading public into what they considered acceptable. Specifically, for those associated with the American Genteel Tradition, magazines like *St. Nicholas* were essential in their quest to morally inspire the masses and to promote middle-class, Victorian-American values by the inclusion of certain selections from the cultural canon and from the proper styles associated with the American Renaissance. This was not the only intention of the art and aesthetic education program in *St. Nicholas*. As I will argue, the editors included reproductions of the types of art work being collected by the American elite, and styled the magazine and illustrations after acceptable and fashionable styles of contemporary art. While there is some evidence that these images inspired certain children to pursue art as a career, it was more likely that the visual imagery and layouts in the magazine were intended to visually train young middle- and upper-class youths to be good consumers of culture.

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3 Lee Simonson Letter, dated August 18, 1936, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 11, Folder 5.
The democratization of art and aesthetic appreciation was enfolded into what is called the Victorian parlor tradition. Louise L. Stevenson states that American intellectual life did not only take place in the public sphere of cultural institutions and institutions of learning. She argues that much of the intellectual pursuits of Victorian Americans took place within the domestic interior, and more specifically, around the parlor table. Instead of being a place for quiet and individual contemplation, the parlor was a place for the family to gather together to pray, play games, read aloud to each other, listen to music, and learn together as a unit. Moreover, the parlor was within the domestic sphere, and therefore its activities were guided by the woman of the household. In the early years of the Republic, the roles of wife and mother became extremely important and sanctified as a woman’s sacred duty. It was believed that a good, chaste, Republican woman would correctly train the future citizens of the new nation, ensuring that the democratic ideals of America pass to the next generation. Most important was the education of young boys, for it was believed that they would be the future leaders of the country and therefore required proper training. Women took responsibility for the early education of their children and taught basic reading, writing, and ciphering skills, religion and moral guidance, and practical crafts. As Stevenson observes:

Most women found that the concept of republican motherhood helped them to gain control over their own lives. They took charge of the education and discipline of their children and the management of their homes. Since Victorian men increasingly worked at a distance from their homes, women assumed responsibility for the purchase of most consumer goods, including furnishings and food. By mid-century women had assumed primary responsibility for the decoration of their homes. As they exercised this new

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4 Stevenson, 32-35.
responsibility, their influence would be felt in the private lives of Victorians and would have far-reaching effects on the public world.⁶

As a response to the new responsibilities associated with Republican motherhood, advice pamphlets and books became extremely popular. One writer in particular, Catharine Beecher, addressed the woman’s role in domestic economy, decoration, and general upkeep. From 1829 through 1874, Beecher published information that was intended to guide women in establishing a morally sound, yet patriotic household. In books like *A Treatise on Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School* (1842), *The Duty of American Women to Their Country* (1845), and *Principles of Domestic Science as applied to the Duties and Pleasures of Home* (1870), she exalted the role of mother and wife, and stressed a woman’s place within the domestic interior. Most importantly, Beecher’s manuals urged American women to create a pleasant and inspiring interior by decorating their homes with simple handicrafts, plants, and prints of noble art. In her opinion, either engravings or lithographs were acceptable as long as they pictured morally sound subject matter that could inspire the residents of the household with frankness and honest sentimentality.⁷ Through the decoration of the domestic interior, Victorian American women bestowed on their children a certain caliber of visual taste, one that was rooted in romantic sentimentality and didacticism. Additionally, as the mother of the household put Beecher’s advice into practice, she impressed upon her children the importance of beautiful things, especially beautiful art, to the well-being of both the family and the country. Her offspring learned exactly what kind of art was acceptable to the Proper Victorian American, why

⁶ Stevenson, xvii

it was proper, and the so-called power of art to mold and shape the thoughts, actions, and moral well-being of a person.

Americans who could afford to do so also subscribed to the various art-unions that were active during the first half of the nineteenth century. The art-unions were organizations that sponsored yearly exhibitions of contemporary art, focusing primarily on American art and artists. Each year members of the art-union received an engraving of a sponsored artwork, and were entered into a lottery to win an original piece of art owned by the art-union. Membership in the art-unions provided the general population access to contemporary art. The art-unions, most notably the American Art-Union of New York, provided the necessary patronage and exposure to American artists who were struggling to establish themselves as a viable profession. Through yearly lotteries and exhibitions, the art-unions provided Americans access to original pieces of art when most Americans knew artworks only through reproductions. This was especially true for those who lived outside of the artistic epicenters of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. The ability to purchase reproductions of art, and perhaps even win an original work, democratized art in America by putting it within the reach of citizens. These establishments trained Americans in proper taste and basic art appreciation by providing examples of acceptable and approved art. In 1852, at the urging of the National Academy of Design and through an active campaign in the New York Herald, the courts ruled that the American Art-Union’s yearly lottery was gambling, and therefore illegal, putting an end to the art-unions. While the end of the art-unions limited access to visual culture for rurally located Americans, monthly periodicals filled the void, particularly after the Civil War.

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9 Groseclose, 11.
The parlor tradition also included the practice of reading aloud as a family. Reading aloud acted as both entertainment and as group education that spread acceptable information from the heads of the household to their offspring. According to Stevenson, the typical middle class household could not afford to buy many books, reserving their purchases to a family bible, religious literature, and the classics. However, in the years just before the Civil War, and most certainly after, the majority of families in America were able to afford to buy newspapers and magazines. The reading of periodicals not only provided families with important local, national, and international news, especially during the Civil War, it provided them with current literature and a vast array of educational topics including art and aesthetics. Many of the ladies’ magazines like *Godey’s Magazine* and family magazines like *Hours at Home*, later absorbed into *Scribner’s Monthly*, regularly included features on art, architecture, and artists. Depending on the focus of the magazine, the art and artists that were featured were either contemporary American artists, particularly those of the Hudson River School or the early genre school, or were the great masters of European art. After the Civil War, the majority of the gentry magazines turned their attention to mostly European art and artists. As discussed below, this corresponds with the collecting practices of the newly wealthy entrepreneurs, as well as the shift in cultural focus in American taste and training.

As the letters in the “Letterbox” show, *St. Nicholas* was part of the Victorian-American, parlor tradition. The magazine was often read aloud by children for the entertainment and benefit of the entire family. More numerous are letters that state that mothers read to their children, exemplifying the role of the good republican mother. Furthermore, letters written by

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10 Stevenson, 42.
mothers often state that *St. Nicholas* was an acceptable and good source for education at home.\(^\text{12}\) Time and again, readers would write to both “Jack-in-the-Pulpit” and the “Letterbox” to share information, correct the editors, and ask questions about science, literature, art, history, and a variety of other subjects.

Finally, letters in the “Letterbox” indicate how the readers of *St. Nicholas* used the reproductions of fine art and what they thought about certain artists and features. Presumably following the domestic advice of Stowe, one mother from West Virginia cut out some of the reproductions of fine art, including those of Raphael’s work, to frame and hang in her house.\(^\text{13}\) From these letters and others found in the archives, it becomes clear that *St. Nicholas* played an important role in self-education and cultural refinement.

### The History of Art and Aesthetic Education in America

To understand *St. Nicholas*’s role in the promotion of art and aesthetic education in America, it is necessary to understand how and why art and aesthetic education became a national objective. Art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries occupied a tenuous place in American society. For some critics like John Adams, art’s association with Old World luxury, leisure, immorality, and aristocracy made its purpose within a newly formed democracy questionable. He insisted that art was akin to frivolity, and was the product of “despotism and superstition,” therefore it had no place in the young democratic Republic.\(^\text{14}\) Others suggested that the pursuit of art and culture would develop in the new nation once its citizens achieved

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economic security and international prestige.\textsuperscript{15} The later criticism illuminates the economic reality of the new nation, and exhibits an understanding of the conditions necessary for art and culture to flourish within a society. Art and culture can only develop in a society if there are enough resources to commission art from trained professionals; and enough paying customers to keep the artist comfortably in business. Unlike the countries in Europe, America had neither the aristocracy or church to support the arts, nor did it have a completely realized program of government patronage. Additionally, at its beginnings, America did not have the enormous amounts of private wealth necessary to support artists or maintain institutions of art training. While it is true that the main colonial cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston were able to support a thriving arts culture, by no means could they support the cultural development of an entire nation.\textsuperscript{16} Finally, art’s development in America was limited by its populace’s exposure to art works and to art and aesthetic education.

However, despite the lack of economic security and the lingering puritanical mistrust of visual imagery, the pursuit of cultural refinement in America began as early as the 1690s and was based heavily on British standards. An important part of this quest was the attainment of proper cultural mores and the display of gentility acceptable for a citizen of an English province. This included an English gentleman’s education, a profound understanding of aesthetics, and the support of a meager visual culture. According to Richard L. Bushman, the beginning of cultural refinement in America paralleled that of England, albeit slightly later. By the 1690s, American elites in the major colonial cities were actively cultivating the manners, speech, dress, body

\textsuperscript{15} Miller, 13; Neil Harris, \textit{The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790-1860}\textsuperscript{\textregistered} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 110-120.

\textsuperscript{16} Miller, 5.
carriage, and accouterments of British polite society. Colonists depended on newly arrived British etiquette tutors, educators, and artists, and imported books and pamphlets for their cultural knowledge. Private tutoring and self-education were the standard methods of cultural attainment in colonial American society.

Within a century and ignited by the successful defeat of England during the War for Independence and impassioned by the desire to gain economic and cultural independence from Britain, social leaders called for the active pursuit of building a national culture. The defeat of a large, established British military force by a small, agrarian colony, and the subsequent development of a unique governmental system based on the democratic ideas of the Enlightenment emboldened the new country. However, it also made its leaders acutely aware of their immense responsibility for “the moral tone of their country, for its cultural achievements as well as its political well-being and economic success.” As part of the nation-building process and as the result of increased wealth brought about by the Revolution and by England’s dependence on the new nation’s raw materials during the Napoleonic Wars, cultural leaders actively encouraged and supported artistic production in America. Many of these cultural leaders were also economic leaders, and advocated their peers and the government to support art produced by native artists whose work was created in a distinctly American mold. It was believed that increased private wealth and a centrally regulated government would provide the material support for art to flourish in the new country.

18 Miller, 8.
19 Miller, 9-10.
However, it was precisely this material wealth and America’s initial lack of cultural achievement that led Europeans to criticize the Republic. Many European visitors like Henry B. Fearon and Frances Trollope criticized American manners, social structure, and propensity for materialism. While Trollope criticized American children for being too bold, lacking proper manners and the leisure for childhood games, Fearon questioned America’s ability to produce great art, complex philosophies, and substantial culture. Negative criticism by European travelers to America only added to the insecurity and self-consciousness of Americans in the process of nation building. Not only was it desirable for America to build a national native culture to prove its independence from Britain, it was necessary for America to demonstrate to the European countries that it could compete on a world stage. Furthermore, American cultural leaders were driven by the belief that the new nation was superior to the Old World in government, economics, moralism and cultural achievement. Therefore, it was necessary to nurture an art that would reflect this superiority.

As noted above, some critics like John Adams advocated that America avoid the visual arts and cultivate austerity instead. He, and other critics who linked the fine arts to the decadent courts of Europe argued that the visual arts would lead young America astray from its chaste Republican goals. They insisted that art was useless and wasteful, and that it was based in impure and immoral philosophies associated with European courts and the Catholic Church. Concerns for a morally sound nation as a reflection of a proper and morally sound citizenry plagued both the supporters of the arts in America and those against the development of the arts.

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21 Miller, 13; John Adams to Abigail Adams, 3 June 1778, in Burn and Davis, 59
The creation of a moral nation and the development of a national culture was answered by the
advocation of a moral cultural philosophy based in Enlightenment ideals. Ironically, it was
introduced into American society by the philosophical writings of the very country from which
Americans desired intellectual and cultural independence: England. 22

British Enlightenment philosophy was readily available to the American reading public
via imported books and pamphlets throughout the eighteenth century. As discussed further in
chapter two, the philosophies of John Locke had infiltrated American society by the mid-
enceenth century and had a profound affect on the concept of childhood, in turn affecting
publications for children. Moreover, the Enlightenment ideologies of the French philosophers
were introduced to America through Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and most notably,
Thomas Paine. By the time the Declaration of Independence was penned by Jefferson, the
educated elite were familiar with the basic tenets of the great British and French Enlightenment
thinkers. However, it was the British philosophies associated with art, morality, and the nature of
man that had the most influence on art production and aesthetic education in America after 1790.

The most important British Enlightenment concepts that supported the cultural
nationalists’ argument for a national art were that mankind was molded by its environment and
its experiences, and that the cultivation of taste and an appreciation for beauty positively affected
the moral well-being of a person. In response to the criticism of those like John Adams, cultural
nationalists had already argued that the only art a morally upstanding country like America could
produce was morally good art. The deceitful, decadent, immoral art of which Adams spoke was
most surely produced by an immoral and lascivious society. 23 However, under the influence of

22 Miller, 14-15.
23 Miller, 19.
the aesthetic theories of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Archibald Alison, proper and moral art was no longer just a product of a morally sound society, it was the balm for all the ills of society and could positively influence anyone who understood it. British Enlightenment ideals also provided the philosophical guidance for those who posited themselves in the role of upper-class and intellectual society members, a role that was defined as early as the 1690s. In this role the elite members of American society cultivated a proper interest in art and aesthetic education, supported artists, and created institutions of culture and learning. Most importantly, the cultural elite saw themselves as moral guardians and, therefore, took it upon themselves to actively try to shape the tastes of the American masses according to Enlightenment and neoclassical ideals. As early stewards of proper American culture, they defined the role of cultural tastemakers.

In his *Seven Discourses on Art* (1778), Sir Joshua Reynolds argued that the fine arts have the power to morally influence a person to good, noble and proper behavior, and to inspire a person to pure, rational thoughts, providing that the art displayed the neoclassical concepts of perfection and idealization of physical form, of rational composition, and of the influence of classical art and Renaissance art. Art composed within these constructs was didactic, edifying, and morally uplifting. Reynolds tasked artists to abandon their sensual and fashionable productions, and, instead, take up the mantle of moral responsibility:

> The wish of the genuine painter must be more extensive: instead of endeavoring
to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavor to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking praise, by deceiving the superficial sense of the spectator, he must strive for fame, by captivating the imagination.

The principle now laid down, that the perfection of this art does not consist in mere imitation, is far from being new or singular. It is, indeed, supported by the general opinion of the enlightened part of mankind. The poets, orators and rhetoricians of

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24 Bushman, xii.
25 Miller, 14-15; Harris, 160, 162, 167.
antiquity, are continually enforcing this position, that all the arts receive their perfection from an ideal beauty, superior to what is to be found in individual nature … The artist is supposed to have ascended the celestial regions, to furnish his mind with this perfect idea of beauty.”

This same ideological argument for the moral edification in art and the social responsibility of the artist was also prevalent in France at the same time, and was part of a larger discourse surrounding neoclassicism, as can be seen in the writings of the German, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Nevertheless, it was Reynolds’s work that was widely read in America during this time. Moreover, he directly influenced American artists through his tutelage of Benjamin West, who in turn, wholeheartedly provided guidance for American artists who followed him to England for artistic education. It is through Reynolds’s writings and through artists who would return to America to practice their profession that the American public was introduced to British neoclassical concepts.

Archibald Alison was also read widely in America during the early years of the Republic, and would continue to be read throughout the nineteenth century. His ideas were based on the philosophy of associationism, which promulgated the empirical experiences of mankind as the basis for the construction of self. As such, the experiences and environment of a human being had a profound affect on the development of intelligence, emotions, morality, and general personhood. This, in combination with Reynolds’ neoclassical ideology of the didactic nature of the visual arts, provided the cultural nationalists with a tangible philosophy that supported the development of art in America based on its edifying nature.

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26 Sir Joshua Reynolds, Seven Discourses on Art. (1901; Project Gutenberg, 2005), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2176/2176-h/2176-h.htm#startoftext.
27 Miller, 18-19.
The early years of the nineteenth century brought cultural shifts in politics, philosophy, and religion that affected the position of art and aesthetic education in America. While the didactic and edifying nature of art was still professed and encouraged by the cultural elites, the discourse changed to reflect Jacksonian democratic politics of the “common man.” Transcendental thinkers like Ralph Waldo Emerson urged his fellow countrymen to embrace art and culture as a way to awaken moral goodness, proper thoughts, and gain insight to the spiritual world through the study of the natural world. Emerson rejected the lofty declarations of neoclassicism by asserting that worthy art must come from native sources, and that it must reflect the subject matter and spirit of America. He denounced the European examples, and encouraged American citizens to embrace art that was straightforward, simple, commonplace, and above all, American. Art should not be vulgar, and should demonstrate noble emotions and stir the imagination. He urged that all citizens, and not just the cultural elite, judge art for themselves.28

Transcendental philosophy also provided cultural crusaders with the invaluable link between nature, art, and the Divine. The concept of finding God and spiritual signs within the ordinary, natural world was not a new practice in America. The early settlers, especially those of the Northeast, habitually looked toward the natural world for the manifestations of God’s will and grace. Weather occurrences and natural disasters had particular importance, and America’s unique landscape held significant meaning to the settler’s continuous push westward.29 American ministers, politicians, and philosophers were not the only ones to find a connection between God and nature. German Romanticists and writers like the Englishman John Ruskin,

28 Miller, 26-27.
29 Harris, 171.
who will be discussed shortly, shared this philosophy with the Transcendentalists, and ultimately added to their popularity and credibility.\textsuperscript{30}

Their adoration of nature as an expression of God’s truth and beauty depended upon the accepted superiority of sight, in that one “sees” the manifestations of the Divine in the natural world. Additionally, Transcendental philosophy incorporated Swedenborgian ideology of correspondences in that what appears in the material world is a direct reflection of the spiritual, therefore nature was considered morally good. As Neil Harris explains:

> It was vital for man to understand his proper relationship with the external world, for strangers to nature were alienated from God. The energy of the Supreme Being, what Transcendentalists called ‘Spirit,’ lay behind and throughout all material objects. All matter was therefore good in the sight of God, and all of nature deserved reverence.\textsuperscript{31}

Art played an important role in Transcendental ideology. Transcendentalists like Emerson heralded the importance of art and beauty, yet considered art inferior to the creation of the natural world. However, they believed that a painting was not a mere imitation of the material world; rather it contained the ocular sensations and spiritual insight of the artist. Therefore, the artist was considered to be the medium through which God’s grace, as manifested in the natural world, was translated as brought to the viewer for consideration. Transcendentalists like Emerson considered artists to be more important than the art itself, for it was through the artist that divine sensations were translated. They considered artists to be divine geniuses and demanded that their lives be moral, upstanding, and inspiring:

> The artist who educated men to the possibilities of spirit exerted both a practical and moral influence. It was imperative that he be sensitive to nature and deeply religious.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} Harris, 170.
\textsuperscript{31} Harris, 173.
\textsuperscript{32} Harris, 179.
Furthermore:

The Transcendentalists most valued art energy, not art achievement, the artist’s life rather than the artist’s works. Not all of them were prepared to appreciate, study or even experience great art, but all saw the artist’s role in society as meaningful and inspirational.33

For Transcendentalists, worthy art was produced by artists who were morally sound, who were capable of completely translating their ideas and sensations onto the canvas, and who revered nature as a reflection of God’s presence. It was believed that the American artist filled this role because he was without artifice, was raised in a morally upright society, and took his inspirations from the American landscape, which was already considered a manifestation of providence. However, Transcendentalists did not consider art to be a didactic tool for the moral education of society. Rather, viewing art was a personal experience that was meant to inspire the individual with beauty and truth as manifested in nature.34

Much of the Transcendentalist philosophy proved to be too foreign and too complicated for the general populace. When their beliefs were introduced in the popular press or in polite Victorian conversation, the more esoteric ideology was left out. What remained were the ideals surrounding the moral requirements of art, and the accepted doctrine of God’s presence within nature, particularly in the American landscape. Civic leaders utilized these theories to promote their own agendas for the purpose of art and aesthetic education of the general population. These conservative leaders transformed the radical ideology of the Transcendentalists that was aimed at the individual into a didactic tool designed to mold the masses into proper Victorian American

33 Harris, 175.
34 Harris, 179.
35 Harris, 182.
citizens. Additionally, it was used to promote American artists who focused on indigenous themes and fueled the patriotic mistrust of European examples.

Not all Americans were supportive of the insular nationalism promoted by civic leaders. While it was agreed that for America to compete on an international level it was necessary to develop its cultural capital, it was not agreed as to how this was to be done. As discussed thus far, Americans like John Adams and Noah Webster supported the practice of insular nationalism in their desire to separate the new, democratic Republic from European autocratic examples. However, European influences, especially those of England and France, played a tremendous role in the development of art and architecture in America. Imported literature on artistic ideology and art history, and reproductions of European artworks were collected among many learned Americans before the Revolution and throughout the nineteenth century. Most importantly, American artists sought their artistic education abroad simply because there were no instructional institutions in American before the development of the American Academy of Fine Art in New York City (1802), the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia (1805), and the National Academy of Design in New York City (1825).

Pre-Revolutionary artists like Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley studied in England at the Royal Academy. West, a student of Sir Joshua Reynolds and the eventual head of the Academy, was particularly supportive and welcoming to budding American artists who flocked to his studio for instruction, including many artists associated with the Post-Revolutionary generation. England was the logical place for American artists to study because the manners, heritage, and languages of the two countries were almost the same. With the
exception of John Vanderlyn, France was not considered a viable place of artistic study for American artists until the mid-nineteenth-century. However, American dignitaries like Thomas Jefferson spent a considerable amount of time in France and introduced much of the country’s neoclassical artistic philosophy, particularly architectural design, to America.

American artists who were striving to establish their profession in America were faced with multiple challenges, some of which were a lack of training academies, established institutions for showing and selling their work, and an established patron base. Many artists like John Singleton Copley and Samuel F. B. Morse complained of the lack of cultivation and taste among the general population, which contributed to the lack of interest and support for history painting. In an undated letter (original spelling) to R. G. Bruce, John Singleton Copley expressed his frustrations with his American patrons who preferred portraits to other types of art:

Perhaps You may blame me for not taking anoth[e]r subject that would have afforded me more time, but subjects are not so easily procured in this place. A taste of painting is too much Wanting to afford any kind of helps; and was it not for preserving the resembla[n]ce of particular persons, painting would not be known in the plac[e]. The people generally regard it no more than any other usefull trade, as they sometimes term it, like that of a Carpenter tailor or shew maker, not as one of the most noble Arts in the World. Which is not a little Mortifiing to me. While the Arts are so disregarded I can hope for nothing, eith[e]r to incourage or assist me in my studies but what I receive from a thousand Leagues Distance, and be my improvements what they will, I shall not be benifitted by them in this country, neighter in point of fortune or fame.

In 1827, Samuel F. B. Morse encouraged Americans to broaden their cultural tastes by supporting history painting, historical portraits, and historical landscapes over mere landscapes, still lives, and genre paintings. He argued that art is hierarchically ranked based on intellectual difficulty over mere technological virtuosity:

37 John Singleton Copley to R. G. Bruce, undated, quoted in Burns and Davis, eds., 49. Misspellings in the original.
Imperfect as the scale may be, we shall make the attempt at something like a just classification; taking as the leading principle, that that department or that work of art should rank the highest which requires the greatest exercise of mind, or, in other words, that *mental is superior to manual labor* [italics his].

As such, it was imperative for the American public to learn about and develop a taste for the hierarchy of painting, which was rooted in European models, in order to support and free the artist from merely being a craftsmen or copyist. Morse believed that the success of American art as a profession did not depend only on economics or the development of training institutions, but also on the development of American taste for European models. Americans’ perceived lack of taste for refined academic art, and their preference for homegrown landscapes, genre scenes, and sentimental and idyllic depictions of American life plagued artists who were struggling to establish their profession in America before the Civil War. Artists like Morse were determined to educate the public through educational essays in the popular press and through their support of education institutions that stressed European models of learning.

American intellectuals and members of high society traveled to Europe in the early Republic and antebellum period despite the perceived negative moral influence of European society and the vitriol towards absolute monarchy. Most of them did so in a quest for self-improvement and desire for culture, seeking out the Old World monuments and artworks that they only read about in books or had seen as reproductions. Others traveled to Europe to find the roots of their own culture, as noted by Foster Rhea Dulles:

> The spirit in which these travelers sought out Europe was nostalgic and sentimental. Theirs was a romantic return to the past, a devoted search for the

38 [Samuel F. B. Morse] “The Exhibition of the National Academy of Design,” *United States Review and Literary Gazette* 2 no. 4 (July 1827): 244.

wellsprings of their own culture. They viewed with enthusiasm the sites and scenes that they associated through history or literature with their European heritage.40

By the 1830s, criticism of Old World culture softened as more and more Americans traveled abroad to gain refinement, taste, and aesthetic education. While insular nationalism had a strong voice among many cultural leaders, cosmopolitan tendencies infiltrated intellectual, artistic, and elite circles, creating a counter to what was perceived as the “flat dullness” of Jacksonian democracy.41

Advocates for European acculturation and the insular nationalists agreed that American society needed to cultivate artistic taste and support a national art in order to compete on an international stage. Additionally, both parties agreed that art had a didactic, moral function and that artists had a social obligation to produce such art; however, the type of art and the location of artistic training differed. Both parties found common support in the artistic philosophy of John Ruskin, who seemed to champion the patriotic ideology of the insular nationalists while advocating an appreciation of European art and architecture, particularly that associated with medieval art and fifth century BCE Greek art.42 In 1843, the first volume of John Ruskin’s book, *Modern Painters*, was printed in England, and was followed by the second volume in 1846. In 1847, the American printing of *Modern Painters* made its debut. Ruskin’s book was immediately successful in America and was considered to be a crucial text for the advancement of art and aesthetic education in this country.43 The reason why Ruskin’s artistic ideology was

40 Dulles, 31.
41 Dulles, 31.
42 Linda S. Ferber, ““Determined Realists”: The American Pre-Raphaelites and the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art,” in The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites, edited by Linda S. Ferber and William H. Gerdts, (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Brooklyn Museum, 1985), 11; Harris, 149.
successfully adopted by Americans was because it validated their belief that God’s will and grace could be found in nature, and therefore truth, beauty, and morality were located in art based in the study of natural forms.\textsuperscript{44} Ruskin proposed that art’s primary function was to inspire moral goodness in people; therefore, it was the artists’ duty to produce morally just art. Lillian B. Miller states that Ruskin argued that only noble and ethical societies produced acceptable art, something that Americans saw in their own nascent, democratic society:

When … Ruskin underlined the intimate relationship that he believed existed between art and national morality — the idea that art reflected a nation’s character and highest moral aspirations — he was effectively reinforcing an attitude that had prevailed in this country for the previous half-century.\textsuperscript{45}

While Ruskin’s artistic philosophy of the divine in nature partly influenced that of the Transcendentalists, his beliefs differed in that he did not place individual experience over the capacity of moralistically good art to properly mold society. Most importantly, Ruskin believed that art and artistic institutions like libraries and museums had the power to positively influence all classes within society, and therefore advocated their establishment and the aesthetic education of the masses. It was believed that beauty, truth, and goodness found in both nature and proper art could inspire all people to live moral and noble lives.\textsuperscript{46} Therefore, it was imperative for the good of society and the nation that art and aesthetic education be promoted.

Moreover, Ruskin’s ideology differed from that of the Transcendentalists in an important way: his divine in nature was specifically that of the Protestant God. For the most part, Transcendentalist authors avoided allocating a specific pantheon to the divine and, instead, utilized labels such as “Over-Soul” and “Spirit.” This practice betrays their roots in Eastern

\textsuperscript{44} Stebbens and Ricci, 13; Miller, 28-29; Ferber, 15.
\textsuperscript{45} Miller, 29.
\textsuperscript{46} Harris, 170, 179; Miller, 29.
philosophy, explicitly those of Buddhism and Hinduism, and reveals precisely the esoteric teachings disregarded by the American public. Ruskin, however, specifically referred to God and the Bible, which was readily accepted by the predominately Protestant American society.47

Not all of Ruskin’s ideals were generally accepted in America. Americans were critical of Ruskin’s advocation of socialist ideology and his disdain of modern economic systems, especially that of capitalism. Industrialists mistrusted Ruskin’s belief in the nobility of the skilled craftsman and his support for labors’ rights. While many cultural leaders agreed with Ruskin’s endorsement of modern artists over European Old Masters, they did not share his conviction that art before Raphael and art of the fifth century BCE Greece was superior to all other periods of art.48 Medieval styles in art and architecture would become popular in America in the years just before the Civil War, followed by Classical, Renaissance, and French Beaux-arts forms as the preferred styles during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These became the hallmark of the American Renaissance.

Ruskinian philosophy continued throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries because of American reprints of his writing and through the writing and teaching of his ardent followers such as Charles Eliot Norton, William J. Stillman, Clarence Cook, and the members of The Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art. However, like early readers of Ruskin’s work, those throughout the century and into the next chose specific aspects of his philosophy that would best bolster their own agenda.49 Three specific ideals are repeated: that artists’ primary focus should be truth to nature and the cultivation of beauty; that art and nature

47 Miller, 29.
48 Miller, 28; Ferber 14.
49 Stebbins and Ricci, 14.
have the power to inspire goodness and morality in society; and that cultural institutions like museums play a pivotal role in the improvement of all classes in society.

In 1850, Charles Eliot Norton visited John Ruskin at his London home. Norton was already familiar with Ruskin’s writing, and enthusiastically embraced the Englishman’s philosophy. Ruskin became a mentor to the young American, and Norton, in turn, became an advocate for Ruskinian philosophy in America. Under Ruskin’s influence, Norton promoted the ideals of truth to nature, morality of art, and the importance of cultural institutions. Like Ruskin, Norton believed that public museums were essential to the welfare of society, especially to the health and moral well-being of the lower classes. Additionally, both men believed that it was the moral and national responsibility of the educated classes to collect and preserve the art of the past for the education of future generations. These beliefs influenced Norton’s contributions to the prominent American magazine *The North American Review*, which he co-edited with James Russell Lowell (1862-1872). Most importantly, Norton introduced future scholars to Ruskin’s ideals through his positions of professor and Dean of Art at Harvard College (1875-1898).

Aside from being an advocate for Ruskinian philosophy and a supporter of the short-lived Pre-Raphaelite movement in America, Norton was a part of a group of writers that George Santayana derisively called the “Genteel Tradition.” While predominately a literary circle, the Genteel writers had a tremendous influence on the arts and aesthetic education in American through their personal support of cultural institutions, and through their very public presence as

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50 Stebbins and Ricci, 22-23.
editors, writers, and critics for some of the most popular American magazines, including St. Nicholas. John Tomsich describes these men:

These men, all but forgotten now, were among the most eminent figures in respectable American culture in their day. They are the poet, Richard Henry Stoddard; the poet, novelist, and short-story writer, Thomas Bailey Aldrich; the poet and playwright, George Henry Boker; the poet, novelist, playwright, and world-traveler, Bayard Taylor; the editor of Harper’s Weekly and crusader for civil service reform, George William Curtis; the specialist in late medieval literature and architecture, Charles Eliot Norton; the editor of The Century, Richard Watson Gilder; and the critic, Edmund Clarence Stedman.”

Two of these men, Richard Watson Gilder and Charles Eliot Norton, were directly involved in the art world. Gilder was married to artist and advocate, Helena DeKay, and Norton, as discussed previously, was a proponent of Ruskin, a supporter of both the Pre-Raphaelites and The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, and a professor and dean of art history at Harvard College.

The men associated with the Genteel Tradition had differing political opinions on contemporary topics like slavery and civil service reform. However, as a group, they thought of themselves as crusaders for art and culture whose goal it was to free art from the moralistic and political constraints put upon it by the former generation. They were especially critical of the Boston Transcendentalists because they felt that Emerson and his circle neglected the aesthetics of art and instead subscribed to cultural conservatism. The Genteel authors believed that the aesthetics of beauty and truth to nature should be the only qualities by which art should be judged. This premise of “art for art’s sake,” while usually associated with the later Aesthetic Movement, can be traced throughout the first half of the nineteenth century to the philosophy and

53 Tomsich, 7. Note: Mary Mapes Dodge was either personally or professionally associated with almost all of these men, and was close friends with many of their wives.
writing of Emmanuel Kant, Victor Cousin, Benjamin Constant, Théophile Gautier, Edgar Allen Poe, and, most importantly, John Ruskin. It was probably through their reading of Ruskin’s works, and more than likely through Norton’s influence on the group, that they accepted this tenet into their lexicon.

It is ironic that the Genteel writers criticized the Transcendentalists for being too conservative, when in reality, they also subscribed to extremely conservative dictates. At the same time that they denounced the political and moral purpose of art, they subscribed to the belief that beauty and truth was the balm for the corruption and ills of society. Like many conservative Victorian Americans, they believed that art and beauty had the power to transform even the most hardened soul; and that it was the duty of the “enlightened” and educated classes to make the aesthetics of beauty and truth available to the public in the form of museums, parks, and city planning.

In reality, their mission was not so different from that of the Transcendentalists. The main differences lay in the location of the edifying quality in the artwork and in the relationship of art to the person. Both agreed that truth to nature was a desirable quality of art. However, Transcendentalists argued that truth and the inspiration of the artist were necessary to translate the moral goodness and the Divine found in nature, thereby creating a moral art. Those of the Genteel Tradition ignored the Divine aspects of nature and art, concentrating instead on the edifying aspects of aesthetics, especially that of beauty. Beauty was enough to inspire wellness and proper behavior in people because the aesthetic qualities of art directly affected the soul.

The Transcendentalists maintained that the purpose of art was not for social control or to dictate

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the behavior of the masses; rather, its purpose was to inspire the individual in his or her private lives. Conversely, the Genteel writers saw art and culture as tools to be used to instill proper feelings, proper virtues, and proper behavior to the masses. This cultural program was especially important after the Civil War when the Genteel writers rallied against burgeoning capitalism, overcrowded cities, and increased immigration. Theirs was a world of middle-class manners and behavior, and their cultural goals were didactic in nature.55

The editors of magazines like St. Nicholas, Scribner's/The Century, and Harper's Weekly saw their magazines as vehicles for the promotion of good taste, proper manners and behavior, and good morals based on secular and patriotic principles. The editors, themselves, publicly defined their role as harbingers of culture and crusaders for the middle-class, Victorian American ideals. They maintained a strict and somewhat prudish editorial policy that catered to the preferences of their predominately upper- and middle-class audience.56 The editors of these magazines promoted literature and features that were of interest to their presumed audience. However, unlike Dodge and those involved with the creation of St. Nicholas, the Genteel editors had no intention of marketing their magazines to the lower classes and newly arrived immigrants. Furthermore, their readers were not encouraged to share the magazine with these groups. Instead, the magazines promoted middle-class, Victorian American tastes directly to those who shared the same interests and tastes.57

The magazines that the Genteel writers edited often featured articles on art and architecture accompanied by finely detailed, wood-engravings of the artwork being discussed.

55 Tomsich, 24-25.
56 Tomsich, 5; and Mark Noonan, Reading The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine: American Literature and Culture, 1870-1893 (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2010), 13, 18.
57 Tomsich, 24; Noonan, 16.
Though not mentioned in any of the literature, one can assume that the purpose of these features was to promote art education and aesthetic appreciation, as will be discussed in relation to the art and aesthetic education program of *St. Nicholas*. The types of art work chosen by the editors range from American landscapes, contemporary European art, especially that of French art, art of Antiquity, Medieval art, and that of the Old Masters. These choices represent contemporary American collecting preferences and the artistic taste of John Ruskin and his followers. Moreover, the inclusion of Renaissance examples reveals the postbellum cultural mindset of the American Renaissance. The Genteel Tradition was part of a broader movement in nineteenth-century America that has come to be known as the American Renaissance (1876-1917). The American Renaissance has been used to identify the art, architecture and the general zeitgeist of the late nineteenth-century in which can be found associations with the grand traditions of European art, especially the Italian Renaissance. While this art was generally considered conservative and traditional, there was also an interest in the contemporary styles associated with English Aestheticism and French Impressionism. The American Renaissance was essentially a nationalistic and imperialistic movement to place American culture on an international stage by appropriating international styles. Most importantly, America saw itself as the rightful heir to European culture, a belief that coincided with concurrent imperialistic goals.58

The Genteel writers were also part of a larger and broader cultural movement that continued throughout the nineteenth century. The “crusade for beauty,” as Neil Harris calls it, started in the early part of the century and was fueled by the desire to commemorate the heroes of the American Revolution.59 Throughout the century, American cultural crusaders concentrated

59 Harris, 188.
on creating park-like cemeteries, developing expansive parks, reconstructing the urban
landscape, and supporting the fine and decorative arts with the desire to control the behavior and
tastes of the American masses. Their ideals were in line with those of the Genteel Tradition,
Ruskin, and the Transcendentalists: that nature was a restorative for the overworked capitalist,
and provided moral and spiritual uplift to all classes; that beautiful landscapes, cityscapes, and
things affected a person in positive ways, leading to proper behavior, good manners, and sound
morals; and that access to art and beauty in proper settings would lead to social wellness. As
noted by Neil Harris:

Immensely popular campaigns for patriotic monuments, rural cemeteries and
landscaped homes augmented the American commitment to manipulating the physical
environment. The arguments evolved showed how art and beauty were merged with
reform ideals — conservative or progressive — and transformed into an aesthetic
ideology. Painting and sculpture were also suffused with ideological objectives…

After the Civil War, the campaign for beauty reached a zenith in response to the
perceived decadence and immorality of capitalists, a decrease in rural and wild countryside, an
increase in urban population caused by the migration of freed slaves into cities to find work and
the influx of immigrants into the country, and the expansion of the poor and laboring classes.
The creation of cultural institutions like museums, libraries, and opera houses continued the
ideology espoused by the Genteel writers and cultural crusaders. Furthermore, newly established
rules that governed the conduct of those patronizing these cultural establishments supported the
Genteel writer’s efforts to control the public’s manners and behavior.

St. Nicholas was an important tool for those associated with the establishment of these
cultural institutions. Through the inclusion of fine art reproductions and stories about art and

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60 For a complete discussion see Lawrence Levine, “Order, Hierarchy and Culture,” 171-242.
61 Harris, 188.
artists, and the use of styles associated with the American Renaissance within its pages, the magazine brought the cultural lessons found in the museums into the parlors, classrooms, churches, and work places of anyone who could get their hands on it. As part of the parlor tradition, *St. Nicholas* contributed to the self-education — and perhaps, the self-refinement — of its readers.
Chapter Two: The History of St. Nicholas and Its Place in American Publishing for Children

In November 1873, the first issue of Scribner & Co.’s new monthly periodical, St. Nicholas Magazine: Scribner’s Illustrated Magazine for Girls and Boys was published (figure 2). Conceived as a companion to the popular adult magazine, Scribner’s Monthly: An Illustrated Magazine for the People, it was to engage in the social and cultural work of the late nineteenth-century embodied in what cultural historians have called the “Genteel Tradition.” According to the editorial focus of its founders, Roswell Smith (1829-1892), business manager of Scribner & Co., and Dr. Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881), editor of Scribner’s Monthly, the juvenile magazine, like that of its parent magazine, was designed to promote proper taste and manners, cultural refinement, and the development of good character and morals based on a secular American Protestantism. While St. Nicholas was not the only children’s magazine to be published at this time, it became one of the most successful, the most sophisticatedly produced and the most sumptuously illustrated of the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries children’s periodicals.

In this chapter, I explore the sociocultural influences that reconstructed the concept of childhood and that made publishing for children a desirable and lucrative business. I will show how illustrated children’s literature, specifically periodicals, paralleled these developments. I


argue that the success of *St. Nicholas* and the aspects that made it superior to other contemporaneous children’s magazines were based on when it was produced, where it was produced, and the various people and businesses that took part in its development, publishing and distribution. *St. Nicholas* is truly the product of a specific time and place, brought about by the perfect combination of new ideas regarding children, the people and businesses involved in its production, the growth of New York City as the publishing and cultural capital of the Gilded Age, and the immense monetary resources supplied by Charles Scribner (1821-1871) and Roswell Smith. Without any one piece of this combination, I argue that *St. Nicholas* neither would have been as successful as it was, nor would have lasted as long as it did.

**The History of St. Nicholas Magazine**

In 1873, Roswell Smith of Scribner & Co., approached Mary Mapes Dodge with the idea of starting a new children’s periodical. The popularity of *Scribner’s Monthly*, founded by Smith and Holland and financed by Charles Scribner in 1870, encouraged Smith to pursue a juvenile companion magazine. They envisioned one that would mirror the editorial standards of its parent magazine and, serendipitously for the children’s magazine, would share its writers and artists. At the time, Dodge was a wildly popular children’s book author in America and abroad, particularly noted for her 1865 book, *Hans Brinker; or the Silver Skates*. In addition, she was also already working as an associate editor of the juvenile and household departments of another periodical, *Hearth and Home*, under the editorship of Harriet Beecher Stowe. In response to Smith, Dodge wrote a letter outlining her vision for a new children’s magazine. Undoubtedly he was impressed with her response and published it in the July 1873 edition of *Scribner’s*, where it

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served as both an advertisement and prospectus for a project that had been conceived long before Dodge wrote her now famous letter.⁴

As early as 1870, Smith had started to plan for a new juvenile periodical despite an impending economic depression that would affect much of the industrialized world from 1873 to 1900. He proceeded to reduce the competition by acquiring Hurd and Houghton’s distinguished but failing *The Riverside Magazine for Young People* (1867 - 1870) (figure 3), edited by Horace E. Scudder, and he merged it with *Scribner’s Monthly*. In 1873, he bought Ticknor and Fields’s *Our Young Folks: an Illustrated Magazine for Boys and Girls* (1865 - 1873) (figure 4), which was edited by Gail Hamilton, J. T. Trowbridge, and Lucy Larcom, and merged it with the newly formed *St. Nicholas*. After all, despite Scribner & Co.’s lofty goals of providing its readership with “instruction, culture and entertainment,” it planned to make money.⁵ These mergers also gave Scribner access to the subscription lists, authors and illustrators of these magazines, giving the newly formed *St. Nicholas* a comfortable position in the market and valuable artistic resources.

With the promise of an annual salary of $5,000, a $2,000 raise from what she earned at *Hearth and Home*, Dodge accepted Smith’s offer and became the first editor of *St. Nicholas*. The first issue appeared in November 1873 and its first page contained a heartfelt greeting to all the boys and girls of America:

*Dear Girl and Boy -- No, there are more! Here they come! There they come! Nearby, far off, everywhere, we can see them, -- coming by dozens, hundreds, thousands, troops upon troops, all pressing closer and closer.

Why this is delightful. And how fresh, eager, and hearty you look! Glad to see us? Thank you. The same to you, and many happy returns. Well, well, we might have*

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⁴ Kelly, ed., 378.
⁵ [Unsigned editorial]: 115.
known it; we did know it, but we hardly thought it would be like this. Hurrah for dear St. Nicholas! He has made us friends in a moment.⁶

This greeting speaks directly to the child on an equal footing. It is neither didactic nor condescending, and instantly establishes the voice of future editions. What is noticed instantly is the important value and place that the child occupies in the pages of *St. Nicholas*. Also, the voice of the adult writer of this greeting, presumably that of Dodge, is anonymous and the reader is made to feel that adults exist on the outskirts of this magazine, or at least exist as secondary helpers to the child-reader. This voice is in direct correlation with the editorial policies for a child’s periodical that Dodge outlined in her letter to Smith already cited. Besides stating that a child’s periodical should be heavily and beautifully illustrated, Dodge believed that a juvenile magazine should not have:

- editorial grimacing, no tedious vaulting back and forth over the grim railing that incloses halt and lame jokes long ago turned in there to die.
- Let there be no sermonizing either, no wearisome spinning out of facts, no rattling of the dry bones of history. A child's magazine is its pleasure-ground.⁷

She acknowledged that some moral teaching and instruction were necessary, but it should be achieved without sermon, chastising, or preaching. Harsh reality would take its place in her magazine; however, it would not linger, but rather come and go as the child turned each page. The stories, poems, jingles and other features were often times witty, sometimes quite silly, and always engaging and entertaining. The art work featured in *St. Nicholas* followed suit and the illustrations were either spirited visual puns loosely executed for sheer fun, or beautifully and technically finished pieces that offered a small visual window into the narrative, or drawings for

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history, geography and science, or reproductions of fine art. It is precisely these qualities that set
*St. Nicholas* apart from contemporary children’s magazines, and removed it from the moralistic,
didactic American publishing world of the past.

In the same editorial greeting from the first issue, the name of the magazine, *St. Nicholas*,
was connected to a variety of historical and mythical stories associated with Saint Nicholas and
Santa Claus:

Is he [St. Nicholas] not the boys’ and girls’ own Saint, the especial friend of
young Americans? That he is. And isn’t he the acknowledged patron Saint of New York
— one of America’s great cities — dear to old hearts as well as young? Didn’t his image
stand at the prow of the first emigrant ship that ever sailed into New York Bay, and
wasn’t the very first church the New Yorkers built named after him? Didn’t he come over
with the Dutch, ever so long ago, and take up his abode here? Certainly. And, what is
more, isn’t he the kindest, best, jolliest old dear that ever was known? Certainly, again.

Another thing you know: He is fair and square. He comes when he says he will.
At the very outset he decided to visit our boys and girls every Christmas; and doesn’t he
do it? Yes; and that makes it all the harder when trouble or poverty shuts him out at that
time from any children.  

This statement connected the name “St. Nicholas” with the place that the magazine was
being published, that of New York City, and to the Dutch settlers of the city, which was then New
Amsterdam. Furthermore, it connected the saint to Santa Claus, the mythical being who gives
presents to children on Christmas. These connections leads one to conclude that the choice of
the name for the juvenile magazine, that of *St. Nicholas*, was intentionally conceived to link it to
the character of St. Nicholas/Santa Claus. The language used in the statement conflates the
magazine with the human character; thereby, making the magazine a substitute for St. Nicholas/
Santa Claus. In doing so, the editors, presumably Dodge, gave the newly published magazine a

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legacy and made a promise to its readers that it would be like the jolly old Saint would come to
their door promptly, bringing gifts of happiness and merriment.

By the late 1870s Smith and Holland, under the name Scribner & Co., started to publish
books in addition to their two magazines. This, of course, posed a problem for Charles
Scribner’s Sons since it provided additional competition to their book publishing business. As
early as June 1879, Roswell Smith tried to end the contract between Charles Scribner’s Sons and
his company, Scribner & Co.. However, according to letters in the archives of Charles Scribner’s
Sons, the parent company had all intentions of holding Smith and Holland to the contract.9
Smith purchased Holland’s stock shares and was able to convince Charles Scribner’s Sons to sell
him their remaining 40%, giving Smith full control of Scribner & Co.. As a result, in 1881 Smith
ended business ties with Charles Scribner’s Sons and started The Century Company.10 It would
continue to publish the juvenile magazine as St. Nicholas Magazine: An Illustrated Magazine for
Young Folks and the adult magazine as The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, and would
also maintain its editorial department, art department and printer.

By the 1890s, the popularity of Scribner’s/The Century waned, causing circulation to
dramatically decrease and, in turn, causing the company to lose money. A major reason for the
magazine’s demise was Gilder’s resistance to change its outdated, morally didactic, Victorian
focus for something newer and more relevant. This focus extended to the illustrations, which

9 Misc Account Books of CSII; June 14, 1879; Archives of Charles Scribner’s Sons; Box 722, Book 6; Department
of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
10 Note, Scribner & Co. and The Century Company will be combined and referred to as Scribner/Century. The
magazines, Scribner’s Monthly and The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine will be referred to as Scribner’s/The
Century.
retained a Victorian sentimentality and which were primarily wood-engravings.\textsuperscript{11} The magazine could not financially compete with the less-expensive, mass-produced periodicals that utilized quicker and cheaper printing methods and paper. Compared to \textit{Scribner’s/The Century}, the new magazines seemed exciting and fresh with their realistic style of journalism and halftones of photographs. Most importantly, they were cheap. In 1930, \textit{Scribner’s/The Century} was merged with \textit{The Forum} and ceased to be.

While \textit{Scribner’s/The Century} continued to lose readers and money, \textit{St. Nicholas} remained stable and brought in a profit.\textsuperscript{12} \textit{St. Nicholas}’s continued success was partly due to a “ready made” audience of children whose grandparents and parents continued their own subscriptions for the newest members of the family. The magazine’s continued financial success was also due to its ability to attract new readers and maintain the interest of old readers. This was done by featuring articles on modern interests like football and varsity activities for girls, by garnering reader participation in contests like those sponsored by “The St. Nicholas League,” and by the art department’s continued experimentation with process printing. Throughout the late 1880s and for the rest of the period being discussed, halftones were used regularly to reproduce photographs and artwork. \textit{St. Nicholas} was more radical than \textit{Scribner’s/The Century} because of the editors’ willingness to try new technology and to keep the magazine’s features fresh and current.


\textsuperscript{12} Rodman Gilder Papers, NYPL, as quoted in Tichenor, 164.
Placing *St. Nicholas* in the History of American Publishing

To understand why *St. Nicholas* was so revolutionary it is instructive to place it within the history of publishing for children and compare it to what came before. As noted above, *St. Nicholas* was not the only children’s magazine in the late nineteenth-century, nor was it the first magazine published for children. Several periodicals aimed at children already existed including *The Riverside Magazine* and *Our Young Folks*. One, the extremely popular weekly newspaper founded and edited by Nathaniel Willis (1780-1870) of Boston, *The Youth’s Companion* (figure 5), made its debut in 1827 and ran concurrently with *St. Nicholas* until its demise in 1929. It shared many of the same writers and artists with the younger magazine, and although it could boast a circulation of 500,000 at its height, it does not appear to have been in competition with *St. Nicholas*. The *Youth’s Companion* grew out of the children’s department of the religious newspaper *The Recorder* of Boston, which Willis also founded and edited, during a time of conservative evangelical fervor in reaction to the liberalism of the Unitarian Church. While R. Gordon Kelly insists that *The Youth’s Companion* was one of the most significant juvenile magazines because Willis honestly tried to entertain his readers, he also points out that, “although much that was moral and religious in the magazine could not have been entertaining even when it first appeared, there was nothing intended to be entertaining that did not have a moral or religious theme.” Its original goal, to edify young readers and to aid in their conversion along conservative Puritanical teachings, links *The Youth’s Companion* to earlier

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14 Kelly, ed., 508.
15 Kelly, ed., 509.
American children’s publishing practices which were based specifically on the religious and moral ideologies that society held for children.

By the late 1880s and early 1890s, *The Youth’s Companion* directed much of its content to the adult members of the family, aiming to entertain instead of edify. The weekly periodical was no competition for *St. Nicholas* because it lacked the finish, refinement, and copious amounts of illustrations found in the younger magazine. For example, the January 25, 1894 issue was made up of only twelve pages and was printed on cheaply produced wood-pulp paper (figure 5). A page was divided into four tightly printed columns that were difficult to read and not artistically designed. Furthermore, the issue contained only seven modestly sized wood-engravings that were traditionally designed and not particularly artistic or fine. Most of the visual content was in the form of advertisements which made up a third of the paper.

Comparing Dodge’s goals for a child’s periodical with those of Willis, it is easy to see how *St. Nicholas* departed from had came came before. It is truly one of the first children’s publications that is not heavily steeped in lingering Puritanical ideology and Christian morality and teaching. Most importantly, it was one of the first magazines that did not insist on severe lessons enforcing good behavior that described what would happen if a child misbehaved. In the pages of *St. Nicholas*, one never found children being severely punished for bad behavior, nor did babes go to hell simply because they never fully converted into the Christian church as

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adults. Instead, the images and stories in *St. Nicholas* reflected the contemporary, progressive ideals of childhood as a time of play, discovery, innocence, and unspoiled nature.

**Child-Depravity and Protestant Didactic Literature for Children**

Very few original books and periodicals were produced in the American colonies during the eighteenth-century, and none at all in the seventeenth-century. Most of the literature available to both adults and children was imported from England or pirated by American printers who did not bother to change the text or images, when there were any, to reflect American language or settings. Gillian Avery points out in her book, *Behold the Child*, that a lack of trained writers and artists in the colonies certainly hindered original publications, and many of the books available in America were either expensive imports or American reprints. Printers such as Worchester’s Isaiah Thomas and New York’s Hugh Gaine concentrated solely on reprinting English publications despite the fact that all thirteen of the original colonies had printing presses by the 1760s.

The concept of the “child,” particularly in New England, was nonexistent and child-rearing practices reflected this. Children remained so until they was able to walk and speak, at which time they were molded into the strict Protestant mindset through intense study of the Bible, rote memorization, and often times severe beatings. The child was not considered an innocent, but rather was considered to be born with the taint of Adam’s fall which made him

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17 Avery, 39.
prone to anti-Christian behavior. In response to these beliefs, parents took every measure to raise their children with the singular goal to save their already damned souls, including regulating the types of reading material that was given to them.\textsuperscript{18}

In the eighteenth-century, the bulk of children’s publishing consisted solely of catechisms, educational materials laden with severe Protestant morality, simplified and illustrated Bibles, and didactic stories celebrating good and pious children, like James Janeway’s (1636?-1674) book, \textit{A Token for Children, Being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children} (1671), and its sequel a year later, \textit{A Token for Children, The Second Part, Being a Further Account of Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Other Young Children, Not Yet Publish’d in the First Part}, both of which would be printed together in all subsequent printings. Firstly, like most of the literature geared towards children during the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth-centuries these books were primarily designed to teach children how to read. Reading literacy, particularly within Protestant society, was required in order to read the scriptures and develop a personal relationship with the Bible. Reading scriptures, albeit often times slowly and deliberately, was the best way for a person -- adult or child -- to achieve salvation.\textsuperscript{19} Early letter books were combined with religious teaching, as seen in a hornbook from the eighteenth-century (figure 6). In this example a piece of paper printed with the alphabet is adhered to a wooden


paddle. Directly following the printed alphabet is the Christian blessing followed by the Lord’s Prayer, two of the first doctrines learned by a young Protestant child. Secondly, books like Janeway’s taught the proper morals and subservience to God necessary to attaining conversation and eventually salvation from damnation. For example, throughout Janeway’s books he tells the stories of thirteen pious and good children who struggle with their eternal fates as they lay dying. In each, the children grapple with the fate of their souls as they oscillate between the damnation bestowed upon them via the fall of Adam and Eve and the salvation of heaven promised to an elite few. According to Janeway, all of the children display the proper obedience to God and engage in proper methods to obtain conversion and, in turn, salvation, such as praying, weeping for their sinful and wicked ways, reading holy books, and begging God for His forgiveness.

According to various scholars of children’s literature and the history of childhood, it was the English Puritans who were the first to write books exclusively for children, albeit with a didactic motive to save their soul from damnation rather than for leisure reading and pleasure.\footnote{John C. Sommerville, The Discovery of Children in Puritanical England (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, c. 1992), 23; Whalley, 11.} While the subjects of childhood death and strict Puritanical religious practice seems moribund and gruesome to the modern reader, one must remember the frequency of childhood death in the seventeenth through nineteenth-centuries. With the grave so close to every child’s cradle and the Christian belief that all children are born in sin and destined for damnation unless he or she undergoes true conversion, books like Janeway’s and magazines like Willis’s The Youth’s Companion make pedagogical sense since death for children could come at any time and it was best to be prepared. When considering this kind of literature one must remember that death surrounded these children not only in their real lives, but as an all-pervasive religious ideology
since with Adam’s fall came the pain of death. While Patricia Demers and Gordon Moyles state
in their book *From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children's Literature to 1850*, that
books like *A Token for Children* “were meant to frighten readers into submission,” Joyce Irene
Walley suggests that Janeway’s book was “meant to give pleasure and make the child happy,”
particularly because the children in the book are examples of *joyful deaths* that could possibly
comfort readers during their own struggles with death and salvation.\(^2^1\)

Almost all of the early Protestant books for children were published without illustrations
and would remain so until the early part of the eighteenth-century. The exclusion of illustrations
in these books could be explained by the Calvinist interpretation of the Second Commandment:

> You shall not make for yourself any graven image, or any likeness of what is in heaven
> above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them
> or serve them; for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the
> fathers on the children, on the third or fourth generations of those who hate Me, but
> showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and Keep My
> commandments.\(^2^2\)

Additionally, the exclusion of illustrations could also be explained by the modest economic
conditions of both publishing houses and consumers which would lead printers to forgo the more
expensive production of an illustrated book for children.

When illustrations were included they were small, crudely drawn woodcuts that
illustrated the message of the religious text or embellished the pages with decorative borders and
designs. These pictures were not intended for visual pleasure; on the contrary, they were there
simply to instruct. Yet, to many children they were the first pieces of art encountered in a
conservative Protestant society that did not believe in leisure, reading for pleasure, or visual arts,

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\(^{2^1}\) Patricia Demers and Gordon Moyles, eds., *From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children's Literature to 1850* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), 43; Whalley, 11.

\(^{2^2}\) Exodus 20:4-6, adapted from the NASV.
particularly religious art. As noted in Elizabeth A. Francis’, “American Children’s Literature, 1646-1880,” picture and text combine to create a new “image” or sign that implies meaning.\textsuperscript{23} Nowhere is this more apparent than in \textit{The New England Primer}, published in Boston sometime between 1666 and 1690 (figure 7). The child learns both his letters and Christian doctrine through their mnemonic association, which is furthered by the inclusion of images.\textsuperscript{24} This morally didactic text-image association prevailed throughout the eighteenth-century both in America and England, and can be seen in later illustrated additions of Janeway’s \textit{A Token for Children} (figure 8), and Issac Watt’s \textit{Divine Songs}, first published in England in 1715 (figure 9).

Early children’s periodicals followed the same Protestant guidelines as did book publishing: they were predominately Christian, heavily moralistic, and preached at children instead of entertaining or including them in its pages. When illustrations were included they were of inferior quality -- crude in execution and small -- and served only to illustrate the moralistic writing.

\textit{Tabula Rasa} and Romantic Notions of Childhood: Opening Doors for \textit{St. Nicholas}

The eventual inclusion of illustrations in books for children, the growth in the number of titles available to the juvenile reader, and the variety of subjects and types of books for children was the result of a dramatic change in religious doctrine, educational practice, and the place of the child in society. The changes to the definition and place of the child were influenced by the Enlightenment educational theories of English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), Scottish philosopher Joseph Addison (1672-1719), and French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

\textsuperscript{23} Francis, 202.
\textsuperscript{24} This type of image-text association was already in practice and written about by religious author Francis Quarles in \textit{Emblems}, of 1643. Francis Quarles and Alexander Balloch Grosart, \textit{The Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Francis Quarles} (Chertsey worthies' library. New York: AMS Press, 1967), 45.
(1712-1778). Although their educational methods differed, all three philosophers agreed that the child was born without sin and that his or her moral destiny rested on the training, environment and example of the adult world.

In response to the new definition of childhood, publishing specifically for a juvenile audience developed. Many of the early efforts were written and published in England, most notably the “play books” written and printed by John Newbury, which included his most famous illustrated story, *Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1775). Newbury embraced the Enlightenment ideology of Locke which argued that children learned through play and stories, and that illustrations would not only provide entertainment but would also provide a new avenue for learning. In so doing Newbury created a special niche in publishing specifically for children.

In the late eighteenth-century and throughout the nineteenth-century the sociocultural construction of childhood in America underwent profound changes in meaning brought about by the influx of printed materials influenced by the child-rearing philosophies of Locke, Addison and Rousseau. Most of these books and pamphlets were specifically aimed at parents, educators, doctors and moralists and took the form of either philosophical tomes, manuals, or moralistic novels. Puritan beliefs regarding children began to soften and the ideals of the Enlightenment were incorporated into American Protestant ideology. American parents began to regard their children not as evil beings tainted with original sin, but rather as innocent “blank slates” who, with proper guidance from parents and other adults, could become moral, decent and good Christians.25

The post-Revolution generation was not only influenced by these philosophers but was specifically anxious about the future of the newly conceived American Republic. The child represented not only the abstract concept of the future, but also the specific future success of the American nation. Combining the Enlightenment and Romantic notions of childhood with a Post-Revolutionary Republicanism, Protestant Christian ideology, and anxiety surrounding the development and expansion of a new nation, Americans created a new and specific meaning for the concept of American childhood in which patriotism, civic duty, internal moral regulation, and the development of good character replaced the previous Calvinistic concepts of child-depravity. Childhood became a designated time in a person’s life, separate from that of adulthood, when a youngster learned the lessons needed for future, economic autonomy and for proper development of morality and character, both of which were essential to a newly formed Republican citizenry.

Educators, moralists, politicians, and parents turned their attention to writing books specifically for the American child. While American publishers like Hugh Gaine continued to pirate English books like Newbury’s Little Goody Two-Shoes, many began to edit the British text to reflect new Republican values and ideals. American authors like Samuel Goodrich (1793-1860) in his Peter Parley series and his juvenile magazine, Merry’s Museum (1841-1854), and Jacob Abbott in his Rollo Series (1835-1842), created a distinctly American juvenile literature that was meant to teach, entertain and instill American values of character, morality and

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27 Reinier, x, 4-5, 13-14.
patriotism. By 1830 books and magazines for children reflected the child’s new role as an innocent being who needed gentle guidance and training.

This very simple belief that all children are born innocent and thereby redeemable or corruptible by outside adult influences had a profound change on American ideology, which in turn affected all aspects of social life. As the century progressed these liberal ideals coalesced into the modern concept of “childhood” as a time separate from adulthood in which children live as weaker and intellectually underdeveloped beings dependent upon adults for their security. Children’s lack of a mature intelligence protected them from the dangerous thoughts that were thought to be innate just a century earlier.

**Domesticity and the Protected, Innocent Child**

By the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the foundations of Victorian ideals of sacred motherhood, domesticity and sentimentalism rooted in the teachings of Rousseau gained importance in America as the nation was engaged in border expansion, nation building and industrialized growth. While the nation’s industrialists focused on creating corporate empires, the realm of the domestic grew more important as a sanctuary, a place where even a capitalist could find rest and rejuvenation from the dog-eat-dog world. It was also the place where traditional American values and solid Protestant morals could be taught to the youth of the nation while sheltering them from the harshness of the real world. Motherhood and the domestic were sanctified in the American ethos as the foundations of sentimentality, early education and a proper, genteel culture. Educational institutions such as mandatory elementary school and the growth of kindergartens, both based on the Prussian school model and headed by the “surrogate”

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28 Reinier, 46-47.
mother in the form of a female teacher, helped to prolong and protect childhood and indoctrinate children with the proper models of character needed to survive in an industrial-based economy.\textsuperscript{29} By the 1860s in more liberal circles, children were valued for being children, and laws and institutions were developed to protect them from the cruelty of adults.\textsuperscript{30} By the time \textit{St. Nicholas} was first published in 1873, reformers reconstructed the experience of the American child, sending the majority of children over six to common schools, opening kindergartens, enforcing child labor laws, organizing institutions for homeless children, and insisting that parents follow a more permissive, gentle method of child-rearing. In addition, it was believed that children under the age of six should not be forced to memorize, learn to read, or recite long Biblical passages. These practices, popular in the eighteenth-century, were believed to cause great harm to the impressionable minds and spirits of very young children. Instead, infants and toddlers were expected to spend entire days within the cocoon of the gentle mother, who was told by medical and child-rearing “experts” to engage the child in light play, song, and imaginative stories. All older children were required by law to attend common school. Where farm labor or controlled factory labor took precedence, the child was required to attend school part-time in order to increase literacy amongst the masses and to socialize the working classes to American middle-class ideals.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} Reiner, 118-119, 122.
\textsuperscript{30} Heininger, 10.
Children were not only innocent, clean slates that needed proper guidance as theorized by Locke, but in the late nineteenth-century the concept of the child for the adult population also stood for the duality of past and future. As Karen Sánchez-Eppler points out in her study of American childhood, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, “…childhood is not only teleological, pointing toward unknown futures, but also archeological and nostalgic, recovering a lost past.” For American industrialists who embraced Darwinistic business models that stressed aggression and worldly aspirations, childhood stood for what was once innocent and pure about America and in turn, themselves. As such it was to be protected and guided in more genteel aspirations.

The later part of the nineteenth-century heralded what Scott E. Casper calls “the industrialized book,” which “belonged to this broader industrialization with the book trades and related industries, which was itself part of the American and transatlantic Industrial Revolution of the mid-nineteenth century.” Advances in printing technology, professionalization of authors, artists, and publishers, and the development of photo-chemical processes for the transfer and printing of illustrations helped to create what would become the modern book. These advances and the American appetite for literature, illustrations, culture, travel, science and technology gave birth to the American magazine age. Publishing for children, while still lagging behind that for the adult audience, became a distinct subset of the publishing industry. While the Religious Tract Societies still concentrated their publishing efforts on religious and didactic books and magazines, secular publishers like Scribner & Co. realized the potential in producing

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magazines and books for children that taught American values and genteel culture while also embracing childhood as a time of play and pleasure.

Comparing *St. Nicholas to The Riverside Magazine and Our Young Folks*

It was precisely this liberated attitude towards children, the industrialization of the publishing industry, an increase in wealth, and the growth of American leisure time, that paved the way for the illustrated children’s magazine as described by Mary Mapes Dodge in her letter to Roswell Smith. However, not all illustrated children’s magazines were as financially successful, as popular, or as finely published as *St. Nicholas*. Many of them only lasted a few years because of a lack of adult interest or money to keep them going; many others became victims to the financial panics that plagued much of the last quarter of the nineteenth-century. In order to see what makes *St. Nicholas* superior to contemporary magazines and why it is considered the forerunner to modern children’s magazines one only needs to read through the multitude of bound volumes and compare them to those of other publishing houses. In doing so it becomes extremely obvious that *St. Nicholas* surpassed the efforts of its predecessors and raised the bar for its rivals.

At its conception with the November 1873 issue, the 6 1/2 by 9 1/2 inch magazine had forty-eight pages containing fiction, poetry and factual articles done by some of the most famous writers for an adult audience like William Cullen Bryant and Rebecca Harding Davis, all of which were accompanied by a variety of quality illustrations specifically drawn for the magazine by well-known artists like Harrison Weir, Frank Beard, E. B. Bensell, Addie Ledyard and William L. Shepherd. The illustrations were engraved by Scribner’s top wood engravers like F. Juengling and David Nichols. The first three volumes did not list the names of the illustrators
alongside those of the authors in the table of contents. However, many of the images contained the signatures or initials of either the artist or engraver or, in some cases, both. It is possible to determine the artists who contributed to St. Nicholas in the early years by comparing these signatures or initials with those found in later volumes in which the table of contents did list the artists’ names.

In its first year of publication, St. Nicholas would boast approximately thirty to forty illustrations per issue. These illustrations would range in quality and included end-pieces and historiated letters bought at stock illustration houses, comic or linear-based drawings with little to no background, finely wrought, detailed illustrations and reproductions of art work. The illustrations ranged in size from very small vignettes to double page spreads. More than half the illustrations were signed with one signature or both sets of signatures of the artists and engravers. Throughout most of the 1870s the initials or signatures of the engravers outnumbered those of the artists by more than half, a standard practice in nineteenth-century illustration. Unfortunately, many signatures in the first three volumes can not be identified at all. This type of ambiguity ended with the publication of the fourth volume in which the artists’ names are listed in the table of contents.

The excellent quality of printing for both text and images was unprecedented and was a result of the craftsmanship, professionalism and innovation of St. Nicholas’s and Scribner’s/The Century’s first and longest printer Theodore Low DeVinne. The early pages of St. Nicholas were extremely clear and well-printed with almost no mistakes in layout or composition. DeVinne took pride in clean printing techniques and legible text, both of which can be found in the early
issues of the magazine. In addition, the innovation of DeVinne’s composition and layout staff and the active influence of art director Alexander Drake resulted in many dramatic and inventive page layouts not found in earlier or contemporary magazines. This can be seen in the double-page layout in September 1874, for Henry Howland’s, “The Little Boy Who Went Out to Swim” (figure 10).

A comparison of the first year of St. Nicholas to its predecessors, The Riverside Magazine and Our Young Folks, demonstrates the newcomer’s ambition to surpass what came before while building upon the foundations already laid by these earlier magazines. The Riverside Magazine had much in common with St. Nicholas. Edited by author and educator Horace E. Scudder, The Riverside’s primary editorial focus was to “provide a high level of entertainment for children of literary tastes.” Scudder, like Dodge, saw the great potential in quality illustrated literature for children and believed that children needed books and a magazine of their own that would both entertain and stimulate the imagination. Like St. Nicholas, The Riverside contained the writing of premier English and American authors, most notably Hans Christian Anderson, and illustrations from popular artists like F. O. C. Darley, Thomas Nast and John LaFarge.

Throughout its four volumes, the table of contents contained the names of the artists, some whom eventually contributed to St. Nicholas such as James C. Beard and E. B. Bensell. While Avery states of The Riverside that “there was an abundance of attractive illustrations,”

34 Note that DeVinne’s company, Theodore L. DeVinne & Co., began as Francis Hart & Co. and was eventually acquired by DeVinne when he paid off his debt to Hart and inherited the company from his partner, Francis Hart. Theodore L. DeVinne & Co. incorporated under the name The DeVinne Press in 1908. Irene Tichenor, No Art Without Craft: The Life of Theodore Low DeVinne, Printer (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 2005), 55, 64-55, 155.
35 Avery, 148.
personal experience with the magazine proves her statement to be false when compared to *St. Nicholas*. Unlike the first year of *St. Nicholas, The Riverside* contained only approximately fourteen illustrations per issue, half of which were finished, sophisticated compositions and at least two taking up half to a whole page. Like those in *St. Nicholas*, the illustrations usually contained the signatures or initials of either the artist, engraver or both. While *The Riverside* was primarily a literary magazine, it did strive to seriously present art to children in a handful of features about art, architecture and artists. The printing quality found in *The Riverside* was clear and solid. However, its page layouts and engravings were unimaginative and conservative when compared to those in *St. Nicholas*. While it touted much of the same rhetoric as *St. Nicholas*, it was not financially successful. Avery suggests that “... perhaps even Boston had not a sufficient number of literary children to keep it afloat …” Roswell Smith acquired *The Riverside* in 1870 from Hurd & Houghton.

*Our Young Folks* featured only nine to sixteen illustrations per issue. Almost all of them were no larger than the average wood block, 2 1/2 by 3 1/2 inches and most of them were linear, sketchy and unfinished. The table of contents did not list the illustrators of the features and very few images contained more than one set of initials or signatures. The most impressive illustrations are those of the historiated letters that accompanied the first feature on the first page of each issue. These usually contained seasonal references to the issue month, landscapes or some other form of nature such as flowers or animals. Unlike *The Riverside* and *St. Nicholas*, *Our Young Folks* did not publish very many contributions from foreign authors and artists, opting

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37 Avery, 150.
38 Avery, 150.
instead for an American-centric focus with its roots firmly planted in the North, specifically New England.

Like *The Riverside*, there was a concentration on literature and story-telling in *Our Young Folks*. Many of these features were high-spirited and adventurous in tone, something that *St. Nicholas* would include within its own pages. Occasionally, however, the features in *Our Young Folks* would lapse into a sentimental and didactic tone, harking back to older, Antebellum forms. Specfically, the bound copy of volume two (issues November 1866 and December 1866) contained two special offset, color wood-engravings, something that *St. Nicholas* would feature for the first time in 1882 as the frontispiece to volume ten. In comparison to *The Riverside*, the page layouts in *Our Young Folks* were more innovative, as seen in a page from the January 1865 issue containing the poem “The Color Bearers,” by John Townsend Trowbridge (figure 11). While the page is aesthetically pleasing, it is not as experimental or as visually exciting as a similar page layout in *St. Nicholas*, in which the text and image are fully incorporated (figure 10). Finally, the printing quality of *Our Young Folks* was not as strong or precise, and the paper quality was not as good as in *The Riverside* and *St. Nicholas*. According to Irene Tickenor, the financial panic of 1873 caused Ticknor and Fields to sell *Our Young Folks* to Roswell Smith, who in turn gained access to its contributors and subscription lists.

In comparison to *The Riverside* and *Our Young Folks*, *St. Nicholas* was a more sophisticated and advanced publication in both content and production. However, *St. Nicholas* should be considered as a combination of the best features of the older magazines. It was an amalgam of *The Riverside’s* genteel, cultural sophistication and *Our Young Folks* spirited, often

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39 Avery, 146.
40 Tichenor, 61-62.
times rollicking, fun. As Avery points out, “it built on their foundations; without their example and their achievements it would have had to move more cautiously.”\(^{41}\) While the older magazines may have provided an example for the founders and editors of *St. Nicholas* to emulate and then surpass, its success does not rest on this alone.

**The Keys to Success**

What made *St. Nicholas* so successful during a time of financial panic when fortunes were easily made and just as easily lost was that it was started at the right time, in the right place, and produced by the right cast of characters. If *St. Nicholas* did not have all three factors it would have neither been as successful as it was, nor would it have influenced the future of children’s publishing or American illustration.

**The Right Time**

*St. Nicholas* as a “pleasure-ground” was easy to conceive because childhood had already become a sanctified time of pleasure, play, and adventure. Authors who contributed to the magazine were free to explore themes that were devoid of didactic religious morality. Some contributed stories that obviously concentrated on social morals and manners, while others contributed funny nonsense poems and jingles, historical or geographical accounts, scientific or technological articles, and fantasy or heroic stories. Without the acceptance of children as innocent and worthy of attention and protection specific to them, the editorial ideals of *St. Nicholas* could never exist.

Furthermore, the breakdown of the harsh Protestant ideology in favor of a more secular, religious doctrine allowed for children’s publications to separate the mnemonic associations

\(^{41}\) Avery, 150.
between text and image. Images, while still illustrating the narrative, became more free and more technically advanced as compared to their woodcut predecessors. While we have seen that American book and periodical illustration was influenced by the prevailing social and religious ideology, it was also technically influenced by the training of American artists. As mentioned, the original thirteen colonies had printing presses by the 1760’s; however, they did not have technically trained artists to supply art work to publications. Many of the illustrations in early American examples were directly copied or reused from European examples. It would not be until after the late eighteenth-century that homegrown American artists would leave to train first in England and Rome, then Germany, and then finally in France. American artists would have to wait until the opening of the first art schools to train in America, the American Academy of Fine Arts in New York City in 1802, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia in 1805.42

These institutions of art training and exhibition were the result of a growing trend in professionalism in America within the first half of the nineteenth-century. The term “professional” had originally meant that a person was trained in a certain trade such as clergymen or lawyers. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, and especially after the Civil War, profession came to have a different meaning:

a self-regulated group of practitioners, usually formally organized, that set standards, enjoyed certain social obligations, granted its members particular freedoms, and developed a technical vocabulary to speak across place and to separate itself from the uninitiated.43

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43 Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, eds., 33.
Professionalism not only provided the education and training that artists would need to compete on the international stage, but also created a group of artists who were self-conscious of their position in society and knowledgeable about the specificities of their chosen path.\textsuperscript{44} As a result, this group of professionals, which also included illustrators, demanded public recognition for their vocation and marketed their products in both fine art exhibitions and within the pages of magazines like \textit{St. Nicholas} and \textit{Scribner's/The Century}.

Professionalism was not only limited to the American artist. As early as the first quarter of the nineteenth-century, American authors demanded recognition for their profession. With the help of patriotic moralists and cultural critics, they argued that their work was more valuable than that of their European counterparts because it was produced on native soil and specifically contained Republican American values.\textsuperscript{45} The ranks of publishers and printers, both of whom were also gaining professional recognition in their own right, responded by increasingly including American writers in their book lists and journals.

These trained professional artists and authors contributed to the realization of Dodge’s vision for an illustrated magazine. Linda Ferber, in \textit{A Century of American Illustration}, attributes the growth of illustration in America to, “the development of a literate public hungry for information and entertainment.”\textsuperscript{46} While this is certainly true, the reverse can also be said -- that the development of a literate public hungry for information and entertainment spurred the growth of periodicals. Growing literacy added to the interest in such magazines and would eventually

\textsuperscript{44} Neill Harris, \textit{The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790-1860} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 98.
\textsuperscript{45} Casper, Groves, Nissenbaum, and Winship, eds., 99-101.
bolster their circulation growth. This literacy is directly related to compulsory education for young people instituted by the educational reformers of the nineteenth-century.

Most importantly, *St. Nicholas* would have never been possible if it were not for the use of photography in the printing of images and the advances in printing technology. *St. Nicholas* shared an art department with *Scribner’s/The Century*, and this included its wood engravers. For almost forty years Alexander Wilson Drake was the superintendent for both magazines and was responsible for the engraved wood blocks. Throughout his tenure with Scribner/Century, he worked to perfect photomechanical processes to transfer images to the wood block via photography. Eventually his experiments and those performed by art directors in other publishing houses would lead to photographic processes that would directly transfer an illustration or photo to the printing surface, leading to the obsolescence of wood-engravers. It is his experimentation, as well as Scribner’s/Century’s professionally trained wood engravers that allowed for St. Nicholas to be sumptuously illustrated.

The magazine required that the text, illustrations and complicated layouts be reproduced quickly, but that they maintain an extremely high level of clarity, complexity and refinement. Each issue had over fifty pages and between thirty to eighty images, not including the multitude of advertising pages. At its height *St. Nicholas* boasted a circulation of 50-60,000 copies which were circulated throughout America and abroad to many times that number of readers. The magazine’s printer, Theodore Low DeVinne, also printed *Scribner’s/The Century*, which also

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maintained a very high-level of quality and whose circulation reached 250,000 at its height. In order to successfully print both large-volume magazines on schedule and at the desired level of quality, DeVinne employed the latest printing technology including R. Hoe & Co.’s steam-driven rotary web presses, stop-cylinder presses, and flat-bed presses. As we will see in Chapter Four, DeVinne also experimented in typography and layout designs in order to make the printed page more legible to the reader.

**The Right Place**

Scribner & Co., which became The Century Company in 1881, as well as the printing establishment of Theodore Low DeVinne, originally Frank Hart & Co., were located in lower Manhattan by the time *St. Nicholas* was first published. Although Boston and Philadelphia predominated in publishing and printing establishments throughout much of the nineteenth-century, they lost their clientele and prestige to New York City as early as the 1840s. By the 1870s, New York City was considered the publishing center of America and supported a very active professional literary community. In addition, many of America’s wealthiest families who made their fortunes in the early nineteenth-century in shipping, manufacturing and dry goods and after the Civil War in the stock market and in new, industrialized industries like steel and steam resided in New York City. These families became patrons of literature and the arts by supporting individual artists and by founding institutions of art, music and theater. Neil Harris argues that this combination of a thriving literary community and a wealthy group of patrons in New York City made the metropolis attractive to artists, thereby making New York City the

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49 Tichenor, 71
50 Noonan, 11.
center of culture. These wealthy patrons also supplied the money for the creation of such cultural institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Public Library, putting New York City on the national cultural map. The prominent place of New York City in the nation’s business, cultural and publishing communities attracted the authors and writers necessary to fill the pages of *St. Nicholas*, and supplied the copious amounts of capital necessary for it to thrive.

New York City was a hub for the distribution of goods and people across the nation and to Europe. With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, which connected the eastern seaboard with that of the western interior, New York City gained importance as the nation’s chief distribution port. It also had an active seaport that was capable of docking larger steamships that distributed goods and people across the Atlantic. Finally, in May 1869 the Pacific Coast was linked with that of the Atlantic as the final spike was driven into the rail of the Transcontinental Railroad. These new and faster methods of distribution allowed the raw materials necessary for printing *St. Nicholas* to be sent to the printing shop of DeVinne, allowed for the ease of circulating contributions, copy proofs and letters to the publisher and to the authors and artists involved in the content of the magazine, and allowed for the printed magazine to be sent across the country and abroad in a timely and easy manner. In addition, Roswell Smith negotiated with the United States Postal Service for an inexpensive postage rate for the mass mailing of printed matter, further making it easier and more cost-effective to publish and distribute *St. Nicholas*.  

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51 Harris, 113.  
52 Noonan, 11.
The Right People and Businesses

As I will explore further in Chapter Three and Four, the people and businesses involved in the production of *St. Nicholas* were vital to the magazine’s success. The business offices of Charles Scribner’s Sons, Scribner/Century and Roswell Smith, the editorial offices of Mary Mapes Dodge and William Fayal Clarke, the art department studios of Alexander Drake, and finally the printing and distribution business of Theodore Low DeVinne all worked together as one body in order to create the most lauded children’s magazine of all time. This statement may come as a surprise to many scholars of children’s literature, American magazines and American visual culture since, previously, scholarship has focused on the editorial prowess and power of *St. Nicholas*’s first and most influential editor, Dodge. While it is true that Dodge notoriously regulated the contents of the magazine -- including what was contained in an image -- with an almost complete autocracy, she relinquished her control over the final style and layout of the magazine to Clarke, Drake and DeVinne. Both Drake and DeVinne experimented with new technology, typography and printing techniques in order to create a finely produced magazine within a very limited time. Both men worked together and combined their expertise, which can be seen in the innovative page layouts and intricate art work found in each issue. Additionally, DeVinne’s committed involvement in professional societies like The Grolier Club and The Century Club connected him to alternative ideas regarding book and magazine publishing, including those of William Morris.

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53 For examples see Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, eds., 27-28; Kelly, ed., 378-79.
54 Interview with William Fayal Clarke; Undated; Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge, 1814-1961; Box 11, folder 35; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
55 Tichenor, 116-121
Arguably, Dodge brought her progressive, liberal ideas regarding children to her role as the editor of *St. Nicholas*, but this was not the only thing she brought to her position. Dodge was greatly influenced by her father, James Jay Mapes, who encouraged his children to pursue the arts and who insisted that they have a strong classical education that emphasized literary studies. As a professor of Color Chemistry and Theory at the National Academy of Design and an agricultural scientist, Mapes introduced his children to many distinguished men in the fields of art and science, including their neighbor Asher B. Durand and educator Horace E. Scudder. These connections, combined with Dodge’s own circle of conservative and bohemian literary and artistic friends, provided her with a large pool of talent from which she could obtain contributions to *St. Nicholas*. Additionally, her artistic and literary background and her circle of friends introduced her to a spectrum of art and art theories that would influence her artistic preferences and educational goals for the magazine.

Most importantly, *St. Nicholas* depended on the copious amount of capital that Charles Scribner’s Sons, Scribner & Co. and Roswell Smith invested in the magazine. This monetary support allowed Dodge to pay her contributors handsomely, securing some of the finest examples of writing and art from the premier authors and artists of the time. It provided the funds needed for DeVinne to spare no cost in the printing of the magazine. And, unlike its predecessors, it kept the magazine afloat throughout the various financial crises of the late nineteenth-century.

*St. Nicholas* was truly a product of its time, place and the people and businesses who were involved in its production. Its editorial focus as a highly illustrated children’s magazine was...

56 Series 4: Family Records, Biographies of James Jay Mapes; Undated; Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge, 1814-1961; Box 5, folder 14; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
the result of Dodge’s vision for children’s periodicals in general. Her vision, the birth of St. Nicholas as an illustrated children’s magazine, and its immediate success could not have taken place without the changes in ideology regarding children and their education as discussed in this chapter. The factors I have cited in this chapter, technological, financial, and cultural, culminated in the founding of St. Nicholas, which paved the way for what would become the Golden Age of American children’s publishing and illustration. St. Nicholas would win a place in American publishing history as one of the most influential and endearing children’s magazines.
Chapter 3: Artfully Editing *St. Nicholas*: Mary Mapes Dodge and Her Editorial Staff

Much of the research surrounding *St. Nicholas* concentrates specifically on the editorial control that Mary Mapes Dodge had over her magazine. Susan R. Gannon and Ruth Anne Thompson have suggested that Dodge was able to mold the magazine according to her precise standards by implementing a variety of editorial tactics. She hand-picked an editorial staff who shared her ideals, work ethic, and vision for a children’s magazine. As a result, the staff helped to create a seamless and coherent end product that complied with Dodge’s vision because they shared her cultural and educational ideals. She trusted her editorial team to manage the day-to-day activities of the office while she concentrated on her own editorial duties, which she did from her home office at odd hours. Gannon and Thompson argue that although Dodge did most of her editorial work from her home office, she, nonetheless, took a lively and active part in her role as editor-in-chief. She read and commented upon all literary submissions to the magazine, actively solicited contributions from famous authors, accepted or rejected each submission, gently guided authors with a firm, yet witty, flair, and supervised the editing of the magazine in every stage of production from the initial manuscript to the galleys.

Evidence for Dodge’s uncompromising control over *St. Nicholas* can be found in the extensive personal and business correspondence and editorial records associated with Mary Mapes Dodge, Scribner & Co., The Century Company, and *St. Nicholas Magazine* located in the

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2 Gannon and Thompson, 110-111.

3 Wright, 85.

4 Gannon and Thompson, 11.
archives at Princeton University and The New York Public Library. The editorial notations on manuscripts and galleys written in her own hand suggest a thorough reading and superior proofreading done by a keen and critical eye. Letters to authors and internal notes sent to her editorial team and art superintendent, Alexander W. Drake, demonstrate an editor who was steadfast in her editorial vision to provide children with well-written literature that was not stale and didactic. These archives are peppered with evidence of her ideology regarding children’s publishing, which she was not afraid to state over and over in letters to contributors. Correspondence with authors like Louisa May Alcott and Rudyard Kipling demonstrates her methods of getting exactly what she wanted and what was needed for the pages of her magazine. By offering well-calculated criticism, smoothing ruffled feathers, and freely giving praise, Dodge was able to coax some of their best writing from these writers and many others. She maintained a very influential circle of contacts which she was not afraid to solicit for new material when needed. Her personal and business correspondence are practically a comprehensive list of some of the most influential intellects of the late nineteenth-century.

These accounts, and the research done by subsequent scholars, also suggest that Dodge had complete control of the visual components of the magazine, including the selection of the artwork, the layout, and the design. One study that is of particular interest was done by Michael

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5 Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library; St. Nicholas Correspondence of Mary Mapes Dodge, 1867-1903, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library; Mary Mapes Dodge Collection, 1873-1904, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library; Wilkinson Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge, 1703-1955, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library; Archives of Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1786-2003, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library; Century Company Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

6 Correspondence with Louisa May Alcott, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 1, Folder 27; Rudyard Kipling, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 2, Folder 33.

7 Gannon and Thompson, 131.
S. Joseph, “Illustrating *St. Nicholas* and the Influence of Mary Mapes Dodge,” in Susan R. Gannon, Suzanne Rahn and Ruth Anne Thompson, *St. Nicholas and Mary Mapes Dodge: The Legacy of a Children’s Magazine Editor, 1873-1905*. In his essay, Joseph endeavors to trace “the method by which particular decisions were made regarding the illustration and physical appearance of *St. Nicholas*, and how those decisions related to Mrs. Dodge.” He summarizes Dodge’s involvement in the visual editorial process, claiming that she was deeply involved in all stages of editing, illustrating and printing. He argues that Dodge had a close working relationship with Drake and oversaw all art that was featured within *St. Nicholas*. This included strict censorship of the imagery in *St. Nicholas* so not to offend the magazine’s Victorian readership, particularly the parents. Bare feet, excessive skin, crude visual jokes and depictions of questionable acts like smoking and intoxication were not acceptable in *St. Nicholas* and Dodge was vigilant in her quest to keep her magazine decent. There is also evidence that Dodge solicited artists for their work and encouraged young talent to meet with Drake for assignments. For example, while attending the open studio of Frank Beard, Dodge spotted work by his younger brother Daniel. Impressed by the drawings, Dodge immediately encouraged him to allow her to have them for the pages of *St. Nicholas*. The drawings were published and the artist was promptly paid $75.00. Daniel Beard became a regular artist for *St. Nicholas* throughout the late nineteenth-century, contributing illustrations for games, outdoor activities and projects directed towards older girls and boys. Finally, Joseph briefly discusses the contributions

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9 Joseph, 54-75.

10 Joseph, 70-71.

11 Spencer Mapes, Unpublished biography of Mary Mapes Dodge, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 13, Folder 1.
of her editorial associates, Frank Stockton and William Fayal Clarke, but merely touches upon the importance of Alexander W. Drake and Theodore Low DeVinne, the magazine’s printer.

While John’s essay is a good introduction to the visual editorial process in *St. Nicholas*, it neither explores the important contributions and innovations that Drake and DeVinne brought to the process, nor does it link them and their efforts to the greater cultural program of the magazine. The scholarship done by Arthur John, Mark Noonan and Irene Tichenor on the editorial methods, focus and content of *Scribner’s Monthly*, later *The Century Magazine*, and the printing of it and *St. Nicholas* by Theodore Low DeVinne suggests that while Dodge did maintain full editorial control of what was “proper” for her audience, as well as the focus, tone, and features found in the magazine, she was relatively removed from the production of the magazine as a whole. It is important to remember that the art department of Scribner & Co., with Drake at its head, was in place long before Dodge and *St. Nicholas* were added to its publishing roster. At the beginning of *Scribner’s Monthly* in 1870, Drake oversaw the selection and training of illustrators and the process of reproducing the illustrations through wood-engraving. By the time Dodge was hired to edit *St. Nicholas*, Drake had already compiled an impressive and talented list of artists and engravers, of which Dodge took full advantage for her magazine. As Tichenor points out, “*St. Nicholas* quickly became the prime children’s journal, reaching and maintaining a circulation of about 60,000 for many years. It had access to the same financial backing, illustrators, and production facilities as *Scribner’s*.”

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13 Tichenor, 62.
Furthermore, Drake worked very closely with Theodore Low DeVinne, the printer of *St. Nicholas* and *Scribner’s Monthly*. DeVinne, who was a junior partner at Francis Hart & Co. at the time, went into contract to print *St. Nicholas* in 1873 and *Scribner’s Monthly* in 1874. DeVinne’s lifetime vision was to raise the quality of American printing and, in turn, to “create public esteem for the printer’s work, especially among the scholarly.”14 Like Drake, he was actively experimenting with methods that would improve his particular trade and establish the standards of printing as a whole. Much of this experimentation was done within the pages of *St. Nicholas* and *Scribner’s/The Century*, because they were the largest and practically the only contracts DeVinne had until the early twentieth-century.15 His importance to American printing, typography and book design can not be stressed enough. The actual process of printing the images and text, as well as the artistic composition of the page layouts, are just as important as the literary features and images because they are necessary to transmit visual aesthetic education to the reader. Drake and DeVinne’s influence on *St. Nicholas* is vital to its study because they were both very much involved in the development and advancement of the printing of images, page layout and typography. Noonan observes that because of the efforts of Drake and DeVinne, the magazines of Scribner/The Century, “deserve(s) credit for [their] development of the American school of wood-engraving as well as its promotion of the fine and decorative arts.”16 This will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

Joseph conflates thirty-two years of editing into one, simple argument. Dodge’s editorial tenure was much more complex than he leads us to believe. From the very beginning, Dodge

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15 Tichenor, 35-37, 55.
16 Noonan, 182.
worked primarily from home, only coming in on Mondays to meet with her staff, including Drake. While it is quite possible that Dodge reviewed art work and layouts, contacted and commissioned artists, and edited manuscripts and final galleys, it was virtually impossible for her to oversee the actual printing and technical side of publishing because she was not in the office to do so. After 1881 she was hardly in the office at all and temporarily took a break from her duties. This was caused by her youngest son’s death and her own physical illness and mental exhaustion. At this time she relied heavily on Clarke and her competent staff to produce a visually beautiful magazine. The practical logistics of Dodge’s life need to be taken into consideration when discussing the editorial methods of the visual components in *St. Nicholas*.

The examples of Dodge’s influence have been thoroughly explored by previous scholars and have become part of the accepted rhetoric surrounding the studies of Dodge and *St. Nicholas*. Unfortunately, much of this research does not address to what extent her social contacts and her involvement in the art world in New York City, Newport and the art colony of Onteora Park in New York State influenced her ideas on art, art education and children’s education. In addition, few scholars have made the link between Dodge’s upbringing and education and that of her adult ideology regarding art and aesthetic education that is illustrated in the letter she wrote to Roswell Smith in 1873 and that later was manifest in the pages of *St. Nicholas*. These connections had a profound influence on Dodge’s ideological beliefs and became a major source of inspiration and editorial guidance throughout the thirty-two years she

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17 Gannon and Thompson, 11; Samuel A. Chapin letter dated 9/11/36, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge, Box 9, Folder 31, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
18 See especially Wright; Gannon and Thompson; Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, eds.
conducted *St. Nicholas*. Since Dodge made the final decisions of what manuscripts would be published in *St. Nicholas*, she was responsible for including the many art-historical features that made their way into the magazine, which would most directly supply aesthetic training and art education to her readers. Her cultural taste and ideals played an important role in the artistic direction that the magazine took. In this chapter, I argue that her father’s influence and that of her circle of intellectual and artistic friends indirectly helped to mold the art and aesthetic education program of the magazine by directly influencing her ideology and cultural tastes and beliefs.

Investigation in the archives at Princeton University suggest that the management of the art work was left to Drake, DeVinne and Dodge’s editorial associates, Frank Stockton and William Fayal Clarke. Clarke stated in an interview with Dodge’s grandson, Spencer Mapes, that he acted as a liaison between the editorial department and the art department, often working closely with Drake on selecting illustrations and correcting final proofs. Clarke, especially, was thoroughly schooled in Dodge’s ideals and working methods. He was able to maintain a coherent style based on Dodge’s example during her absence and throughout the twenty-three years of his editorship when he took over after Dodge’s death in 1905. However, in 1901, it was upon Clarke’s suggestion that *St. Nicholas* include a department called “The St. Nicholas League” whose goal was to nurture artistic expression and literary excellence in its young readers. At that point Dodge was completely removed from the editorial process because of her terminal illness. The “St. Nicholas League” which will be discussed later, should, therefore, be considered Clarke’s contribution to the art and aesthetic education program of *St. Nicholas*.

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20 William Fayal Clarke Interview, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 11, Folder 35.
Finally, one must remember that St. Nicholas was conceived as a companion to Scribner’s Monthly. Even though Dodge brought her progressive ideals regarding education, childhood and children’s literature to the project, Holland and Smith had their own requirements for the juvenile magazine. St. Nicholas was to extend the cultural work of Scribner’s to the children of their middle class audience.\textsuperscript{21} Dodge was specifically chosen by them to be the editor of their new magazine not only because she was a popular children’s author, but also because they believed that she would continue their vision for a children’s magazine.\textsuperscript{22} What resulted was an amalgam of both influences, that of Scribner & Co. and that of Dodge. It must be stressed that Dodge shared cultural circles with Holland, Smith and Gilder. She also shared much of their cultural ideology. Therefore, Dodge’s editorship and her control over the magazine was as much the result of Scribner & Co.’s control over the cultural program of their magazines, as St. Nicholas is the result of Dodge’s cultural and educational vision. This is the piece of the puzzle of St. Nicholas that gets ignored or glossed over by scholars.

I am not trying to diminish the importance of Dodge’s cultural and educational ideology in driving the editorial focus of St. Nicholas, nor am I arguing that Dodge’s influence should be removed from the production of St. Nicholas as a whole. Rather, I am arguing for a more complete picture of the process of how this periodical got published every month and the people responsible for doing so. I believe that Dodge and her editorial team, Drake, and DeVinne brought their own influences and education, which ultimately shaped the look of the end product. This team was made up of individuals who were deeply involved in current artistic trends, art and object collecting, as well as the aesthetic and mechanical improvement of their own

\textsuperscript{21} [Unsigned editorial], “Topics of the Time: St. Nicholas,” Scribner’s Monthly 7, no. 1 (November 1873): 115
\textsuperscript{22} Gannon and Thompson, 155.
profession. Additionally, those involved demanded no less than perfection for *St. Nicholas* and ensured that their part in the process was both innovative and flawless. The collaborative process of publishing *St. Nicholas* brought together professionals who, individually, were to become powerful influences in illustration, reproductive technology, book and magazine design, and typography. Under the editorial leadership of Dodge, they created a children’s magazine that built upon and exceeded all magazines that came before in artistic style and quality, and set the standard for all children’s magazines that followed.

**Mary Mapes Dodge: Her Influence and Vision**

Mary Elizabeth Mapes Dodge was born on January 26, 1831 in New York City to James Jay and Sophie (Furman) Mapes. The Mapes and the Furman families were long-time citizens of New York City and were established in some of the most prominent social and educational circles. The families were not only neighbors but were also close friends, and it was only a matter of time that a marriage connection would be made between the two. In 1841, James Jay Mapes moved the family to an overworked, non-producing farm called Mapleridge in Waverly, New Jersey, just outside of Newark. Mapes was an inventor, author and chemist whose main focus was on agricultural reform. He chose this particular unwanted farm specifically to test a variety of chemical fertilizers that he was developing and to experiment with crop rotation with the intent to make his farm an example of what was possible when science was applied to agriculture. Mapes was revolutionary in his scientific ideas because he believed that chemically produced fertilizers could enrich otherwise spent soil and that American farming could benefit

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23 Wright, 2.
from a close relationship with science.\textsuperscript{24} James Mapes was also a miniature portrait painter of some merit, becoming a member of the National Academy of Design after its establishment in 1826. According to letters in the Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection and the unpublished biography of Dodge in the Princeton University archives, Mapes frequently exhibited paintings in the NAD’s yearly show, some of which were still in their possession in 1936.\textsuperscript{25} Between 1835 and 1838, Mapes experimented with color theory and the chemical composition of artists’ pigments because he felt that American pigments were inferior to those produced in Europe and he intended to correct this. During this time he became a Professor of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy of Colors at the NAD, giving lectures on the chemistry of colors.\textsuperscript{26} In addition, a small folder in the Donald and William Dodge collection at Princeton University contains engravings done by Mapes which are labeled as such, indicating that Mapes had practical training and experience in this medium.

James was not the only practicing artist in the household. Sophia (Furman) Mapes came from a comfortable family that originally owned farms in Long Island and a farmer’s market in Manhattan along the East River. Her father was a judge and a man of letters who wrote historical features for the local Maspeth newspaper. From her position in society it can be assessed that Sophia received an education that was appropriate for her gender and status including basic drawing, painting and music. As a result, she painted flowers, played the piano and sung, all of which were taught to her children.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} Gannon and Thompson, 4-5; Victor Mapes letter dated 10/19/35, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 10, Folder 38.
\textsuperscript{25} William Southworth Hunt letter dated 1/8/36, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 10, Folder 14.
\textsuperscript{26} Biographies of James Jay Mapes, Donald and Robert M. Dodge collection, box 5, folder 14.
\textsuperscript{27} Wright, 2.
According to William Southward Hunt in a letter to Spencer Mapes of January 8, 1936, “Professor Mapes is the key to Mrs. Dodge’s young life.” I argue that he was also the foundation of her adult ideology. The method of education and his own circle of influential friends and acquaintances had a tremendous affect on Dodge’s core values and on her future career. The household in which the Mapes children were raised was one that emphasized classical learning for all members of the household, boys and girls alike, and that insisted that all the children would have a healthy love for literature, art and music. Mapes did not hold the conventional wisdom that daughters should only be educated in household matters and frivolity, and saw to it that the girls were trained in French, German, Greek and Latin, natural science, modeling, drawing, music and a wide range of literature including old English ballads, William Shakespeare, John Milton, and Walter Scott. His educational ideals were liberal and progressive, believing that children instinctively liked good literature and that imaginative play was vital to a child’s development. He eschewed the didactic moral and religious books designed specifically for children, preferring to raise his children on adult classics. He, himself, provided much of his children’s education and supervised the tutors and governesses hired to supplement the curriculum he developed for his children.

This was not the only kind of education that the children received. Mapes was associated with some of the most talented, progressive, and brilliant minds of the nineteenth-century, many of whom frequented the Mapes household. Visitors included abolitionist Horace Greeley,

28 William Southworth Hunt letter dated 1/8/36, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 10, Folder 14.
29 Wright, 4.
30 William Fayal Clarke, “In Memory of Mary Mapes Dodge,” St. Nicholas Magazine 32, no. 12 (October 1905): 1060; Wright, 4; Spencer Mapers, Unpublished biography of Mary Mapes Dodge, 24; Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 13, Folder 1.
authors William Cullen Bryant and Washington Irving, engineer John Ericsson and the famous actor Harry Piacise. Through his association with NAD, Samuel F. B. Morse, Henry Inman, Charles Ingham, Thomas J. Cummings, and neighbor and close friend, Asher B. Durand were also frequent visitors to the Mapes household.  

No doubt, the conversations of these intellectuals provided the Mapes children with a broad education encompassing current political events, science, technology, and most importantly, the ideals of contemporary American authors and artists as they sought professional training and recognition within a culturally untutored Republic.

Throughout her youth Dodge practiced both painting and modeling, and seriously considered a career in art, which was cut short by her marriage to William Dodge in 1851. Despite this, Dodge remained active in various art circles throughout her life and maintained personal friendships with noted artists and artistic activists like William Merritt Chase, Helena DeKay and Candace Wheeler. As we shall see, these associations not only provided her with aesthetic training and important contacts, but also kept her up-to-date on current artistic interests and movements within the United States and abroad. Through her parent’s artistic practice, her own training, her family’s association with notable artists, and her own cultural contacts, Dodge garnered a sophisticated aesthetic sense, a working knowledge of fine art practices, and a broad knowledge of art history. Furthermore, this training gave her the artistic eye necessary for the

31 Biographies of James Jay Mapes, Donald and Robert M. Dodge collection, box 5, folder 14; Joseph, 55; Clarke, 1060.
33 Clarke, 1060; Clipping of Dodge’s Obit. from the *Herald*, Erie, PA (8/22/1905), Donald and Robert M. Dodge collection, box 6, folder 7.
editing of art work and layouts, and the cultural knowledge to include art education and current artistic trends within the pages of _St. Nicholas_.

In 1847, Professor Mapes bought the Waverly farm with a loan from a young lawyer, William Dodge. Sixteen years older than “Lizzie,” Dodge was a familiar face at the farm and was often included in the professor’s intellectual circles. When “Lizzie” finally came of age in 1851, she married William Dodge on September 9th and moved to New York City to live with his family. All evidence indicates that the marriage was a love match and that the young couple lived a very happy and socially active life in Manhattan.\textsuperscript{34} Two neighbors of the Dodges who would later become close friends to “Lizzie” and frequent contributors to _St. Nicholas_, no doubt with her prodding, were Bayard Taylor and Richard Stoddard, authors who were associated with the Genteel Tradition. In 1852 the Dodge’s first son, James (Jamie), was born, followed by the birth of their second son, Harrington (Harry), in 1855. “Lizzie” and her two boys were frequent visitors to Mapleridge, which helped her to maintain her very close relationship with her father and sustain the familial bonds so important to her.

Throughout her youth, Dodge’s father was greatly interested in the progressive educational ideals and experiments taking place in Boston in the circles surrounding Horace Mann and the Peabody sisters, Elizabeth, Mary and Sophia.\textsuperscript{35} He was particularly interested in Mann’s mission to overhaul the mandatory educational system provided by Boston’s normal schools through the establishment of a regulatory body, that of the Massachusetts State Board of Education in 1837. As its secretary, Mann promoted a state supervised system that was funded

\textsuperscript{34} Gannon and Thompson, 5.
\textsuperscript{35} Spencer Mapers, Unpublished biography of Mary Mapes Dodge, 36; Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 13, Folder 1.
by a mandatory education tax. He established a uniform, statewide curriculum designed to be carried out over a ten month school year. Most importantly, Mann believed that training in educational theories and methods was absolutely necessary for all teachers. Therefore, he established normal schools and teachers’ colleges for the required education of anyone who wanted to become a teacher. Finally, he advocated a free and mandatory educational system that was not rooted in any religious denomination. Most influential on Mapes’ and Dodge’s personal ideology regarding education was Mann’s advocacy of a progressive educational system based on the Prussian school system. This system, developed by Heinrich Pestalozzi, rejected the traditional school house system, which was led by a male schoolmaster, stressed rote memorization, and unquestioning suppression to authority, and used dry, oppressive schoolbooks. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter one, Pestalozzi’s methods gave prominence to drawing instruction as a way to excite the child’s imagination, to lead to rational thinking, and to gain motor control, leading to good penmanship. Mann replaced that with a system that resembled the romantic ideal of domesticity. Its doctrines reached American shores in 1837 through the writing of Calvin Stowe, who directly observed and reported on the system for the Ohio State Legislature. Most likely read by Mann in addition to other documents regarding the Prussian system, these writings became the backbone for Mann’s theories, which had a lasting affect on the American public school system. Mapes and, through his influence, Dodge, took a great interest in the observations of Stowe, the efforts of Mann, and the progressive educational ideology of the Prussian elementary school system.

37 Reiner, 119.
The Prussian system utilized the contemporary accepted ideals of domesticity in which the mother provided the child with its primary education in the loving, protective and supportive environment of the home. A mother’s role in society -- that of caretaker and moral and primary educator -- was transferred by the Prussian system to the role of a schoolteacher. This system maintained the authoritative position of the teacher; however, the male teacher was replaced with a trained female teacher who ultimately represented the domestic mother. The students, when possible, were further separated into learning groups based on age, which ended the need for an older student monitor who oversaw the learning of younger members of the schoolroom. As in the contemporary domestic setting, each female teacher would report to a male principal who would oversee the entire school.38

Finally, Mapes agreed with Mann’s efforts to inspire children to want to learn through the use of quality textbooks that stressed the combination of factual information with engaging and exciting imagery. Mapes was a critic of all textbooks and readers then being used because he felt that they instilled fear and sorrow in children through their use of heavily moralistic examples rooted in Protestant ideology. He supported progressive educators like Mann and Professor McGuffey of the University of Virginia, who stressed the use of good literature both to teach children how to read and to impart a moral education without the fire and brimstone of previous attempts.39

Mapes also supported the educational efforts of the Peabody sisters, particularly those of the eldest, Elizabeth. All three sisters followed the example of their mother and became teachers,
although Sophia would later become a painter and marry into a creative and mutually supportive relationship with Nathaniel Hawthorne. Elizabeth was the driving force in the sisters’ involvement in educating children and organizing and directing schools for girls and very young children. She is credited with introducing the kindergarten movement to the United States in 1863 with the publication of her book *Moral Culture of Infancy and Kindergarten Guide* that she co-authored with her sister, Mary.⁴⁰ The kindergarten movement was started in Prussia by Friedrich Froebel and followed the same basic principals of the Prussian school system, of which it was part. In the kindergarten model, the teacher was a specially trained woman who would oversee the education of very young children. This education was to be an extension of, or a replacement for, a mother’s domestic education and was aimed specifically at the young children of the laboring poor. Letter, number and color recognition, drawing, manners, secular morality and guided, imaginative play were stressed in kindergarten classes. Elizabeth’s sister, Mary, participated as a teacher in these schools and wrote extensively on education. In 1843, Mary Peabody married Horace Mann, thereby connecting two educational powerhouses that would leave an indelible mark on American education and, through James Mapes’ influence on Dodge, on *St. Nicholas.*

Upon becoming a mother herself, the theories surrounding education and childrearing became increasingly important to Dodge and she discussed these topics with her father during

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her visits to Mapleridge. It is not difficult to see that these conversations with her father had a profound affect on Dodge and her ideology regarding children’s education. It is precisely these progressive, yet morally conservative, ideals that determined her editorial decisions for *St. Nicholas*. Like her father, she believed that children were instinctively attracted to good literature and that children’s natural curiosity would lead them to a solid education. It was up to the adult to provide material to the child that was devoid of overly didactic sermons, contained interesting information, and featured entertaining, but moral, stories, all accompanied by engaging and beautiful images. Dodge’s belief regarding children’s education is best seen in her 1873 letter to Smith.

Likewise, her beliefs were manifested within the actual pages of *St. Nicholas*. The features in the magazine included many factual pieces that spanned the disciplines to include articles on science, technology and history. These were written and illustrated in a manner that was engaging and thought-provoking, often using questions within the text to guide the child’s future exploration. The fictional features, often in serial form like Louisa May Alcott’s “Eight Cousins,” were written and illustrated to entertain the child. Yet, they were also intended to instill a secular, American morality that stressed hard work, compassion, goodness, and a devotion to one’s family and community. Finally, there was no lack of imaginative play as described by the kindergarten movement. Dodge, herself, wrote many silly jingles and poems for the magazine with the sole intention of making children laugh. Other authors, many of whom

41 Spencer Mapers, Unpublished biography of Mary Mapes Dodge, 36 and 53; Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 13, Folder 1.
were also artists, like Palmer Cox, concentrated on the clever combination of word and image to entertain and delight children without any moral or educational undertones. Play, discovery and self-expression were encouraged through the inclusion of short plays, songs, and craft projects, all of which paralleled the practices of the Boston circle surrounding Mann and the Peabody sisters, and followed by James Mapes and Dodge.

The close relationship that Dodge had with her family in Waverly continued throughout her marriage and her life in Manhattan. Unfortunately for William Dodge, this interweaving of familial bonds also included his involvement in Mapes’ financial affairs and investment schemes. Although born into a conservative and wealthy family whose fortune was made in men’s tailoring and merchandizing, Mapes was never one for a balanced book, often spending more than he could ever earn. The only source of income he had throughout much of his life despite his many professional involvements was a respectable stipend given to him by his family and the money that he earned as “an expert witness in the field of patent litigation.”

Mapes’s finances declined throughout the late 1850s and 1860s as a result of bad investments in Southern soil rejuvenation and in a variety of patents and financial speculations. According to Catherine Wright, 1857 was an especially devastating year for the Mapes-Dodge family. Although it was recorded that Mapes paid William Dodge the $2,900 that he owed him in back rent and in turn, took over all the mortgages associated with the Waverly property, he was not able to do any of this. Furthermore, Dodge was financially involved with many of the professor’s failed investments which were further intensified by the securities crash of 1857. Adding to the

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44 Wright, 3.
45 Gannon and Thompson, 6; Wright 11-13; Victor Mapes letter dated 10/19/35, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 10, Folder 38.
family’s turn of fortune was the life-threatening sickness of Dodge’s eldest son, Jamie, who was suffering from an incurable bleeding from the sinuses. This proved to be too much for William Dodge and he left their home on October 28, 1858, never to return. A body was found in New York Harbor weeks later and was identified as that of William. Of course given the circumstances, it was assumed that he committed suicide. However, in an interview with Spencer Mapes, Mrs. James Mapes Dodge gives another angle to this tragedy. She contests that William was very fond of ships and would often take a ride on the Staten Island Ferry when he needed to think. Unfortunately, Dodge also suffered from vertigo, and Mrs. James Mapes Dodge assumed that Dodge had an attack and fell from the ferry to his demise. There are many theories of what happened to William Dodge when he left that fateful day, but the family was quiet and reserved regarding the incident. “Lizzie” was especially silent regarding her husband’s death and never mentioned it in her letters or writing. How Dodge died is not as important as the fact that his death left “Lizzie” alone with two young boys in her care.

It was with the death of her husband that Dodge came into her own as a writer, editor and cultural icon. She was forced to move back home to Mapleridge with her two young boys with the intention of supporting and educating them herself. In order to accomplish this Dodge took up a profession that was respectable for young women at the time and that allowed her to be home to educate and rear her children, that of writing. It is well-noted by her friends that Dodge

46 Gannon and Thompson, 6; Wright, 14. Also see the Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge Box 4, Folder 5 for legal and financial transactions between James Jay Mapes and William Dodge. Note: Jamie outgrew his disease and went on to live a healthy and productive life.
47 Interview with Mrs. James Mapes Dodge, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 11, Folder 35.
48 Wright, 7.
49 Lucia Gilbert Runkle, “Mary Mapes Dodge,” In Our Famous Women (Hartford, CT: A. D. Worthington, 1884), 280-281; Clarke 1062.
had the extreme fortune of never having a piece of writing rejected from any periodical or publisher to whom she submitted her work.\textsuperscript{50} It was during the following decade that Dodge wrote two specific pieces that would establish her reputation as a leading writer for children, \textit{The Irvington Stories} (1864) and her most famous work, \textit{Hans Brinker; or, The Silver Skates} (1865). Both of these books established Dodge’s style as a writer and can be seen as early manifestations of her ideals of what children’s literature should be. Neither are sermonizing, nor are they overly sentimental. Instead, both are entertaining, thoroughly researched for local dialect and color, and teach the morals and values necessary for modern children.

In writing these stories and other short pieces of fiction for leading magazines of the day, Dodge utilized a technique that she would later use as editor of \textit{St. Nicholas} to gauge whether children would respond to and like a story. She simply read the story to children, in this case her own boys, and then asked them questions which led them into a conversation about their likes and dislikes. By reaching out to children in such a way Dodge was able to truly tap into what appealed to their tastes. This technique is an anomaly within prevalent theories regarding a child’s autonomy in current historical studies of childhood and children’s literature. Most accepted historical theory regarding childhood autonomy argues that the structure of cultural creation for children is located in the adult world and filters down to children.\textsuperscript{51} In other words, because of their dependent state, children are subordinate to adults and therefore receive information instead of creating information. They rely upon the adult voice to speak for them and rely on the adult to create learning structures for them. Usually, adults create literature, art

\textsuperscript{50}Clarke, 1062; Gannon and Thompson, 9.
and education that is influenced by memories of their own childhood, guided by contemporary theories of childhood and education. Although Dodge’s writing for children certainly went through her own adult filter, she allowed her sons’ reactions, questions and comments to influence her writing. This practice of “testing” stories and art on real children was continued during her editorship of *St. Nicholas*, as seen in her correspondence with Lucia Gilbert Runkle. It was also a part of Dodge’s broader philosophy regarding children and their literature. While Dodge never specifically published her thoughts on education and literature for children, her ideology can be gleaned from the numerous letters she wrote, especially to her friend Horace E. Scudder. According to these letters, Dodge felt that children should not be preached at and that they, as a reading audience, deserved respect. In her letters to Scudder she argues for “the importance of testing material on real child readers and taking their reactions seriously.” Her interest in knowing exactly what children thought and wanted in order to provide the kinds of features that would appeal to them is best seen in the Editor’s Notes found in the “Letter Box” of September 1881. In this editorial Dodge, in the anonymous voice of “The Editor,” addressed the child-reader directly and actively solicited the readers’ opinions regarding what stories, pictures, features and departments they liked best. These techniques, which she first established during the early part of her writing career, allowed her to tailor *St. Nicholas* specifically for late nineteenth-century children simply because she was well-aware of what they preferred. This gave her writing and her magazine a distinctive edge over the competition for the child audience.

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52 Letter to Lucy Larcom dated 7/28/1876, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box2, Folder 36; Spencer Mapers, Unpublished biography of Mary Mapes Dodge, 215; Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 13, Folder 1.

53 Dodge to Scudder, 23 July 1866 in Gannon and Thompson, 30.

54 “Invitation to the Reader” *St. Nicholas Magazine* 8, no. 11 (September 1881): 892.
Returning to her familial farm after the death of her husband reestablished Dodge’s position within her father’s intellectual pursuits. By 1858, with his son Charley, Professor Mapes was actively experimenting with chemically enhanced fertilizers and other techniques for agricultural revitalization. In addition, he was still participating in the artistic, literary and intellectual circles surrounding the NAD and the other institutions in which he was an active member. Most importantly for Dodge’s future endeavor as editor, Mapes was involved in the editing and management of a variety of magazines and had been since 1840. From 1840 to 1842, he edited the *American Repertory of Arts, Science and Manufacturers*, and was the associate editor of the *Journal of the Franklin Institute*, of which he was a founding member. In 1851, Mapes purchased the magazine *The Working Farmer: A Monthly Publication Devoted to Agriculture, Horticulture, Floriculture, Gardening, Applied Science, Mechanics, Literature, the Arts, and Current Events*, in which he published the results of his experiments. Around this time, Mapes purchased another magazine, *The United States Journal*. He refocused *The Working Farmer* to publish practical and scientific articles that dealt specifically with the concerns and interests of the farming and agricultural communities. *The United States Journal* focused on a broader general audience by offering literature, poetry, art and factual features designed with the lay person in mind. Dodge helped her father edit the magazine and eventually took over as the primary editor. The atmosphere surrounding the editorship of these magazines was a familial one whereby each member of the household contributed to its creation and distribution. The practical experience of editing *The United States Journal* and the business atmosphere of the familial-group was carried over to the offices of *St. Nicholas* by Dodge.\(^{55}\) Dodge purposely

\(^{55}\) Gannon and Thompson 9, 19, 110.
created a domestic atmosphere in the offices of *St. Nicholas* and encouraged each member of the staff to share in the creation of the magazine. While Dodge certainly guided the tone and maintained the proper Victorian morality of her juvenile periodical through censorship, she also depended on her staff for ideas and to carry out the more mundane work of an editorial office. Editing *The United States Journal* gave her the template to follow for her future editorial endeavors. She gained the skills to maintain the complicated logistics associated with magazine publishing and she acquired the experience necessary to be an effective editorial leader of the *St. Nicholas* staff.

In December 1865, James J. Mapes collapsed and died on the steps of the Court House in Manhattan. The cause of death was undocumented diseases resulting from his lifelong obesity, the same affliction that would kill Dodge in 1905. Mapes, of course, left behind a farm and material objects that were distributed to family members. However, he gave his daughter something more important for her future career as an influential editor of a popular children’s magazine -- his literary and artistic contacts. In addition to the previous acquaintances she had made through Mapes’ intellectual gatherings, Dodge made an important contact in the American writer Robert Dale Owens. Through him and his generous introductions, Dodge became fast friends with some of the most important cultural giants of New York City and Boston, including Alice Cary, Mary Booth, P. T. Barnum, John Greenleaf Whittier, Sam Bowles and Lucia Gilbert Calhoun (later Runkle), who would become Dodge’s closest friend. This was not only important for her future career as a writer, but it gave her, as an editor, a readily available pool of authors to solicit, particularly in the 1870s when *St. Nicholas* was just beginning to gain popularity.

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50 Clarke, 1070.
One of the most important friendships Dodge made through Owens was with the young Horace E. Scudder. In October 1866, Dodge met Scudder at a dinner party given by Alice and Phoebe Cary. Earlier that year Scudder was hired by Hurd and Houghton to organize and edit their new children’s magazine, *The Riverside Magazine for Young People*. Like Dodge, Scudder wrote stories for a predominately juvenile audience and, as a schoolteacher, was very interested in the theories surrounding education for children. In December 1866, Scudder visited Dodge at Mapleridge with the intention of soliciting her to write for *The Riverside*, which she did the following year. Her working relationship with Scudder eventually blossomed into a sound friendship rooted in the shared desire to provide children with reading matter that was not didactic sermons, overly sentimentalized stories, or dry, factual features. Rather, both authors believed that children’s literature should entertain the child while portraying life as it is and instilling solid, secular morality. While Scudder extensively published his thoughts on education and literature for children, Dodge did not. As already noted, much of what we know about Dodge’s ideology can be found in correspondence with friends and fellow authors, particularly in exchanges with Scudder. As pointed out by Gannon and Thompson:

> Their letters reveal how closely they agreed on many basic issues and how warmly they supported each other with practical advice and assistance. Dodge believed in the importance of the sort of high-quality periodical for children that Scudder proposed and understood his concern that the magazine should be all that it could be.  

Well before she wrote her letter to Roswell Smith regarding children’s magazines, Dodge had already been discussing her ideas concerning childhood and education with Scudder. In turn,

57 Wright, 44.
58 Horace E. Scudder, *Childhood in Literature and Art* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1894), 241-242; Gannon and Thompson, 30-31; Noonan, 39; Clarke, 1060; Kelly, 380.
59 Gannon and Thompson, 30.
Scudder did the same with her. As discussed in chapter one, *The Riverside* had much in common with *St. Nicholas*. Both magazines provided quality illustrations to accompany features that attempted to entertain and teach the child-reader in a fun, secular way. The features were neither overly didactic nor were they of the rude, blood-and-thunder variety of cheap literature. Finally, both magazines shared in the quest to provide cultural education and attainment through reproducing fine art and providing literature on art, music and history. In many ways, *The Riverside* can be considered a “proto-*St. Nicholas*” since both editors shared the goals and a progressive ideology surrounding children’s publishing. Most importantly, the editors discussed their ideas, frustrations and working methods at length, ultimately influencing each other. Unlike *St. Nicholas*, *The Riverside* did not have the publisher’s support, influential staff, or Roswell Smith’s copious amounts of money, and therefore, was quickly sold to Smith for the right price.

Finally, Horace Scudder provided Dodge with an invaluable amount of technical advice regarding the daily mechanics of magazine publishing. First as the associate editor of the “Home and Miscellany” department for the weekly *Hearth and Home* and then as editor of *St. Nicholas*, Dodge benefitted from Scudder’s generosity. Aside from giving her advice and support, Scudder also sent her a list of authors, artists and engravers with whom he preferred to work. In 1870, Scribner bought *The Riverside* from Hurd and Houghton to reduce the competition for their new children’s magazine. Scudder maintained his close friendship with Dodge as she took the helm of the new juvenile. It can be argued that *St. Nicholas* was quite literally the culmination of their ideas of the perfect children’s magazine. Scudder would remain an influential and close confident throughout Dodge’s editorship.

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60 Gannon and Thompson, 32.
Besides the contacts that Dodge made through Robert Dale Owen, in the 1860s she cultivated a small group of influential friends within the cultural circle of Newark, including William Thomas Hunt, Edmund Clarence Stedman, the Kinneys, the Brownings, and most importantly, the Gilders. Richard Watson Gilder and his sisters were frequent and intimate visitors to Mapleridge, earning Richard the nickname “Watsy.” He and his wife, Helena DeKay, became close friends with Dodge, creating an important link between the two future editors that would eventually lead both of them to the offices of Scribner & Company and into a working relationship.

1868 was an important year for Dodge and Gilder. Both were offered positions in periodical publishing. Dodge was hired as the associate editor of the “Home and Miscellany” department for the new weekly periodical, Hearth and Home, which was edited by Harriet Beecher Stowe and Donald G. Mitchell, and Gilder was hired as a reporter for the Newark Advertiser where Dodge proofread and where her teenage son, Jamie, did odd jobs. In 1869, Gilder, with the help of his friend Newton Crane, started his own newspaper, the Newark Morning Register, which he also edited. Gilder’s editorial efforts did not go unnoticed by Dodge.

Charles Scribner, in an effort to resuscitate his aging and overly religious magazine, Hours at Home, turned to a well-respected and trusted contributor to that magazine -- Mary Mapes Dodge -- for advice. Dodge instantly recommended Gilder.\footnote{Wright, 75. However, according to Roger Burlingame, Of Making Many Books (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 194, Edward Seymour is credited for hiring Gilder.} Although Scribner was pleased with Gilder’s efforts he “wanted an impressive name attached to the magazine. He thought the immense prestige of Dr. Josiah Glibert Holland would bring it into new life and}
success and he invited Holland to take charge.”\textsuperscript{62} Holland turned down Scribner’s offer. After consulting with his business partner, Roswell Smith, Holland made a counter offer, one which Charles Scribner could not refuse. Under the new agreement, a subsidiary of Charles Scribner & Sons, that of Scribner & Company, was created in 1870 with Smith and Holland retaining control of 60% of the stocks and supplying the talent and the celebrity name Scribner desired. Scribner retained control of 40% of the stock and provided his well-known name and prestige in publishing to the new division and its nascent magazine, \textit{Scribner’s Monthly}.\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Hours at Home}, including its extensive subscription list and list of contributors, was absorbed into the new magazine. Gilder was kept on as associate editor, eventually becoming editor upon Holland’s death in 1881.

Dodge had already been a contributor to \textit{Hours at Home} and it is no surprise that her acquaintance, Josiah G. Holland, invited her to contribute to the inaugural number of \textit{Scribner’s Monthly} with “A Day with Dr. Brooks.”\textsuperscript{64} Within two years, Dodge would be asked to write her now famous letter describing her perfect children’s magazine and, in turn, would be offered the editorship of Scribner & Co.’s new children’s monthly, \textit{St. Nicholas Magazine}. \textit{St. Nicholas} debuted in November 1873, exactly three years after \textit{Scribner’s Monthly}. Dodge was the obvious choice for the position of editor because she had an extensive reputation as an author for children who knew exactly what they wanted, liked and needed. Furthermore, she had experience and success in building and editing a new publishing venture aimed at the family, particularly at children. In her position as the associate editor of the “Home and Miscellany”

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\textsuperscript{62} Burlingame, 194.
\textsuperscript{63} Wright, 59; John, 10-12; Burlingame, 195.
\textsuperscript{64} Wright, 62.
\end{flushright}
department for *Hearth and Home*, Dodge built the department by herself because the editors were notoriously absent from their own weekly paper. Aside from a few letters exchanged with Stowe and Mitchell, Dodge had barely any contact with them, which allowed her to develop the department as she saw fit.65 Her position at *Hearth and Home*, as well as her positions as proofreader at the *Advertiser* and as editor of her father’s magazine trained her for the role as editor of *St. Nicholas*. Dodge was the most obvious choice as editor of *St. Nicholas* because she had an excellent reputation, celebrity status thanks to her best seller *Hans Brinker*, and proven ability as an editor.

The program of art and aesthetic education that Dodge introduced in the pages of *St. Nicholas* can be traced to the influential interaction that Dodge had within the Newark circle, to the cultural circle surrounding Gilder and his wife, and to her early editorship of her father’s magazine, *The United States Magazine*. Dodge’s friendships within the Newark circle and with the Gilders exposed her to a literary and artistic ideology of the Genteel Tradition. The Newark cultural circle contained many of the primary players in the Genteel society’s quest to beautify American cities, found institutions of culture, and support the cultural education of American citizens. They believed that these acts of cultural education and cultural availability would have a direct affect on the morality and manners of society from the upper echelons to the lowest of the low. Culture was considered a prescriptive for all that was crass and crude in society. Dodge maintained the relationships she made in the Newark circle throughout her career by frequenting a variety of weekly salons, other cultural and intellectual evenings, and artists' studios. These people became some of Dodge’s closest friends and constant contributors to *St. Nicholas*. Their

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65 Gannon and Thompson, 32-34.
influence and guidance can be seen within the pages of *St. Nicholas* in their features, the accompanying illustrations and Dodge’s editing.

An appreciation of art was part of the Genteel Tradition’s cultural agenda, one to which Dodge would have had exposure in the Newark circle. Additionally, the Victorian morality of the Genteel Tradition guided her in the censorship of images so that they would be tasteful and proper for an American audience. Finally, it is important to remember that *The United States Magazine* also featured art work and articles about art and artists. Therefore, it can be argued that Dodge was accustomed to the practice of including art features within the pages of a magazine for the benefit and appreciation of its readership well before her tenure at *St. Nicholas*.

Most importantly, Dodge’s magazine was part of Scribner & Company whose overarching cultural mission was first established by Holland, Smith and Gilder. According to John and Noonan, *Scribner’s Monthly* was conceived as a tool to be used by the harbingers of culture in their quest to provide the right kind of literature, art and entertainment to the public in order to battle the profane and rude expressions of the uneducated and uncultured classes. In line with that of the Genteel Tradition, they believed that if they supplied the reading public with fine examples of culture it would have a medicinal property on society, inspiring it to goodness, morality and proper behavior. In the advertisement for *St. Nicholas* in the November 1873 number of *Scribner’s Monthly*, it is clear that Scribner & Company intended for *St. Nicholas* to follow the company’s cultural education program:

> As we have undertaken to make “Scribner’s Monthly” as good as labor and money can make it, so no pains will be spared to make the “St. Nicholas” the best juvenile that lives. It will be adorned with beautiful and costly pictures, it will be filled with contributions by the best writers, it will be edited by Mrs.

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66 Noonan, x, xiii, 8.
Mary Mapes Dodge. What more can be said of it, except to assure fathers and mothers and children everywhere that they will want it, and must have it. Wherever “Scribner” goes, “St. Nicholas” ought to go. They will be harmonious companions in the family, and the helpers of each other in the world of instruction, culture and entertainment.67

Although Dodge’s ideological beliefs paralleled those of Holland, Smith and Gilder, she also understood that St. Nicholas should not blindly follow the example of Scribner’s Monthly. Mark Noonan and Susan Gannon, Suzanne Rahn and Ruth Anne Thompson argue that even though Dodge was under contract with Scribner & Co. and that St. Nicholas was certainly conceived as a “helper” in Scribner’s cultural works, she had quite a bit of autonomy over her editorial decisions and focus.68 It is obvious that she had her own ideas regarding children’s magazines when she wrote:

We edit for the approval of fathers and mothers and endeavor to make the child’s monthly a milk-and-water variety of the adult’s periodical. But, in fact, the child’s magazine needs to be stronger, truer, bolder and more uncompromising than the other.69

The editors may have shared an art department, printer and cultural deals, but there is no evidence to suggest that Holland, and later, Gilder, had any authority over Dodge’s editorial decisions.

In many ways, St. Nicholas deviated from the adult magazine. Flipping through a volume, an adult reader is immediately struck by the copious illustrations, some of which are quite funny or silly, and fictional and non-fictional features that address the young reader directly as “boys and girls.” Additionally, the letterbox contains letter after letter from children whose ages ranged from five to eighteen. Yet, nestled in between the adventures of Palmer Cox’s

68 Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, 27; Noonan, 40.
69 [Dodge], 352. See appendix for complete letter.
“Brownies” and the latest instructional by Daniel Beard are features on art history, music, literature and theater. These features point to Dodge’s involvement in Scribner’s overarching cultural campaign because they are perfect examples of art and aesthetic education provided by a gentry magazine. Furthermore, the page layouts, illustrations and typography parallel the trends in American art, indicating a company and vendor-wide effort in providing aesthetic education to St. Nicholas readers. St. Nicholas not only provided entertainment, education and secular moral guidance, but it also taught its readers how to look and, therefore, how to consume culture. However, it did so sandwiched between articles and illustrations that were there to provide genuine delight.

Her father’s NAD contacts and her own associations within the artistic circles of New York City not only gave her the necessary artistic eye and aesthetic training for the artful creation of St. Nicholas, they also gave her access to artists’ studios, galleries, and evening gatherings held by art patrons who also invited contemporary artists.70 These connections also kept her abreast of the various artistic theories, practices and trends, which was important for her selection and editing of the style, artistic features and artists of St. Nicholas. She was a frequent visitor to William Merritt Chase’s open studio gatherings at the Tenth Street Studio building and often attended the theater and weekly events in the company of Mrs. William J. LeMoyne and Linda Dietz.71 In 1870, she made the acquaintance of Charlotte Cushman who was performing a recital of one of Dodge’s short stories, “Mrs. Maloney on the Chinese Question” to which Dodge

70 Joseph, 60.
71 Margueritte Merington letter dated 3/19/36, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 10, Folder 41.
was invited. Cushman and Dodge became fast friends and Dodge spent many summers visiting the great actress and her companion, Miss Stebbins, at the Villa Cushman in Newport, RI.

Dodge’s visits to Newport were so frequent that she maintained a post office box where her letters and work could be delivered without interruption. Undoubtedly, she came into contact with the elite summer denizens of Newport as she attended Cushman’s great parties. One has to wonder how many of the artists and authors that she eventually featured in St. Nicholas she met in Newport on holiday.

In 1887, Dodge made her first visit to the New York State property of Onteora, then owned by her good friend Candace Wheeler. By that time Wheeler was already a noted decorative artist and co-organizer of the Associated Artists (1879). Wheeler bought the Catskill property with the intention to sell lots to American artists, authors, musicians and supporters of the arts. Deliberately planned to be an exclusive literary and art community, Onteora attracted many notables of society. As noted by Clarke in his 1905 memoir of Dodge:

> Onteora had cast its spell, not only on writers, but upon leading artists, musicians, players, and men of first rank in their profession, who had found themselves lured to congenial association within its leafy ways.

In 1888, Wheeler convinced Dodge to buy a lot on which she immediately built a house, calling her property Yarrow. Many of her summers were spent at Yarrow with her family and her immediate friends within this community of like minds. Residents and visitors to Onteora included Richard Watson Gilder, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), John Burroughs, Elizabeth

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72 Correspondences between Charlotte Cushman and Dodge, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 1, Folder 61.
73 In the Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 1, Folder 61 there are letters from Dodge with a Newport, RI return address: P. O. Box 5555, Newport, RI.
74 Clarke, 1069.
Custer, George Bellows and Caroll Beckwith. Many of the members of this elite community already socialized with each other -- personally or professionally -- in New York City. However, at Onteora they were able to relax and mingle with each other in a close and hospitable community, forging close relationships that would carry over to their professional lives. Introductions were inevitably made and new business contacts were created, allowing for this circle of comrades to expand in numbers and opening doors of opportunity. The residents of Onteora also spent the summers performing plays for each other, reciting poetry, hosting dinners and parties, and discussing current events, literature and art over tea while relaxing in the open air. These informal gatherings provided the residents a chance to discuss and defend theories and current trends in the arts, thereby keeping abreast of any new developments. Dodge and her editorial associate, William Fayal Clarke spent many summers at Yarrow working on St. Nicholas. As in the case of Newport, Newark and New York City, the relationships that Dodge made during these summers expanded the pool of possible contributors and kept Dodge’s knowledge of artistic trends current.

As demonstrated, Dodge’s upbringing and her social circles were imperative to the quality, tone and focus of St. Nicholas. Her close friends and acquaintances performed two important tasks. Firstly and most importantly, through their own artistic practices, their involvement in education and the promotion of artistic culture, and their frequent social gatherings, Dodge’s friends kept her actively involved in current cultural trends. They complemented and built upon the firm cultural foundation laid by her father and his circle of artistic and literary luminaries. Secondly, they provided her with a pool of talented authors and

75 Gannon and Thompson, 21; Interview with Mrs. Boudenot Keith (Dora Wheeler), Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 11, Folder 35.
artists who would be willing to contribute to *St. Nicholas*. Furthermore, they provided a link to artists and authors who were not in her immediate orbit. Dodge was quite literally at the epicenter of art and literature in America and, in turn, was active in promoting art and aesthetic education within the pages of *St. Nicholas*.

**Frank Stockton and William Fayal Clarke**

When Dodge became editor of *St. Nicholas* she hired Frank Stockton as her associate editor. Stockton, who also worked at *Hearth and Home*, worked closely with Dodge editing *St. Nicholas*, and often wrote much of the content with her in the magazine’s first year. In 1874, twenty-year-old William Fayal Clarke joined the staff of *St. Nicholas*. When Stockton left the staff in 1878 to concentrate on his own writing career, Clarke was promoted to associate editor, a position that he would hold until Dodge’s death in 1905, at which time he took her place as editor. It is well documented that both Stockton and Clarke managed the daily business of the editorial offices of *St. Nicholas* when Dodge worked from home. They, or messengers, brought manuscripts, galleys or other business to her Manhattan home where she often conducted business-related meetings. Both associate editors proved to be perfect complements to Dodge since they very rarely contradicted her or questioned her decisions. As already mentioned, they shared her basic ideology and her goal to create a superior juvenile magazine. Clarke, more than Stockton, became fully immersed in Dodge’s vision and was directly trained by her in her editorial methods.

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76 Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, 30.
77 Gannon and Thompson, 112; Samuel A. Chapin letter dated 9/11/36, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 9, Folder 31.
Dodge and Clarke’s working relationship resembled that of a mentor-apprentice, in which Clarke followed Dodge’s example without deviation. As she had with Stockton before him, Dodge entrusted Clarke with all daily business in order for her to concentrate on more pressing editorial duties like soliciting contributors, personal and business correspondence, and editing manuscripts, layouts and galleys. In his position, Clarke was trained to handle the minutia of Dodge’s editorial style which benefitted the increasingly stressed and ailing editor. While Clarke brought his own ideas and editorial techniques to the magazine after Dodge’s death, he also continued her focus, tone and style for the twenty-two years of his editorship. This continuation of editing style brought a fifty year coherence to the magazine that added to its appeal and popularity. Even though the features changed with the times and the illustrations and layouts were influenced by technological advances, the focus and the tone remained true to Dodge’s goals for a children’s magazine. By maintaining Dodge’s goals and focus throughout his own editorship, Clarke accomplished two important things. First, he appealed to the parents and grandparents of new generations of children by providing a product that was familiar and trusted. By continuing Dodge’s vision, Clarke was able to tap into the good memories of adults who shared their beloved magazine with the next generation. Yet, by maintaining Dodge’s vision and editorial methods, Clarke was also able to appeal to a new generation whose tastes and lifestyles were vastly different those of their parents and grandparents. Dodge’s goals for the magazine -- to be moral, but not overly didactic, to feature contemporary reality to prepare children for life as it is, to supply the reader with copious, finely wrought images, to instruct and to entertain -- and her method for asking children their opinions and preferences, kept the magazine modern and current well into Clarke’s editorship. Secondly, by maintaining Dodge’s vision and working
methods, Clarke unknowingly influenced modern children’s publishing. Dodge’s influence can be seen in a variety of periodicals for children, most obviously in *Cricket: The Magazine for Children* (begun 1973) whose prospectus was to “bridge the gap existing in children’s magazine publishing since *St. Nicholas* ceased publication ...”78

Within three years of his promotion to associate editor, Clarke’s working relationship with Dodge was complicated and intensified by the death of her youngest son Harry in 1881. Harry was prone to illness -- both physical and mental -- and he died after an intense episode of “nervousness of the brain.”79 The loss of Harry had a two-fold affect on Clarke. Dodge had already relied on Clarke to manage the office while she worked at home and she also depended on him to perform various editorial tasks for which she did not have time. The loss of her son and her intense mourning caused her to temporarily withdraw from actively editing *St. Nicholas*, leaving the bulk of the work to Clarke. Throughout her own career, Dodge suffered from bouts of depression and illness, often requiring her to take restorative vacations at the shore in New Jersey or in the Catskill Mountains.80 By the 1890s, Dodge’s physical illnesses brought about by obesity required her to spend much of her time away from the office, and in some cases, away from her editorial duties. Clarke was extremely important during these times because he took over her duties as editor. In many ways, Clarke was the editor of *St. Nicholas* towards the end of Dodge’s life.

Clarke was the same age as Harry and quickly became a member of the household. Like many of Dodge’s friends, Clarke was invited to dinners, parties and vacations. However, he truly

79 Wright, 120.
80 Gannon and Thompson, 112; Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, 50, 70.
became a part of Dodge’s life when he moved in with her after Harry’s death. Under her roof he became a surrogate son, replacing the dead Harry for a grieving mother. He provided the support and companionship analogous to a son and cared for her, with the help of a nurse, during her illnesses. He quite literally became part of her family, so much so that Dodge’s granddaughter, Fayelle, is named after him.\textsuperscript{81} He remained her primary caretaker and housemate until 1898 when he married Katherine Strickland, Dodge’s personal nurse.

Living with Dodge brought Clarke into her immediate cultural circle, including that of the Onteora, the New York and the Newport scene. He was surrounded by Dodge’s luminous friends and lived with a woman whose home was described as spacious, artful, refined and elegant.\textsuperscript{82} Under her wing and surrounded by the art and cultural theories of the Genteel Tradition, Clarke gained the sophisticated aesthetic training necessary to continue Dodge’s cultural program within the pages of \textit{St. Nicholas}. Additionally, he acquired the contacts that he needed to perform his duty as editor.

Finally, their living arrangement was extremely beneficial to the magazine itself. Living together, Clarke and Dodge were able to blur the lines between work and home even more. By having her associate living with her, Dodge was able to carry out business at all times and did not need to go to the Scribner/Century office to conduct her magazine’s business.

As pointed out by Joseph, both Stockton and Clarke had an active role in working with Alexander W. Drake on the layouts and images for the magazine, which they shared with Drake’s assistant, William Lewis Fraser.\textsuperscript{83} Clarke’s participation in developing the layouts with Drake is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[81] Wright, 153.
\item[82] Clarke, 1068; Samuel A. Chapin letter dated 9/11/36, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 9, Folder 31.
\item[83] Joseph, 58.
\end{footnotes}
confirmed in interview notes and Clarke’s handwritten notes for Spencer Mapes’ unpublished biography of Dodge located in Princeton. Additionally, the artists’ and engravers’ own recollections can shed light on the key participants in the visual editorial process. It is no surprise that Drake’s name comes up time and time again in their letters and other writing.

Artists and engravers both recalled the process by which their art work and blocks were reviewed by Drake, and how the art department acted as a social club where they could meet and fraternize. Much correspondence specifically addressed the compassion and kindness of Drake, and the copious amounts of guidance he gave to them. One letter in particular, that of Charles Dana Gibson, recalled that all the business he did was with Clarke. James Montgomery Flagg recalled that he had only dealt with Clarke, who seemed to be “a charming but seemingly slightly harassed gent,” and he found Dodge to be “a handsome dignified aloof benignity.” Clarke’s involvement in the editorial process cannot be stressed enough, particularly during Dodge’s absences. He was responsible for correspondence with artists, worked with Drake to maintain tight deadlines, helped design the layouts, and acted as a liaison between Dodge and the rest of the staff and art contributors.

Clarke’s influence on the art and aesthetic education program in St. Nicholas took a more obvious and influential form in the development of the “St. Nicholas League” in 1899. Headed by Albert Bigelow Paine for nine years and then Clarke during his editorship, the purpose of

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84 Interview with William Fayal Clarke and hand written notes by Clarke, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 11, Folder 35.
86 Charles Dana Gibson letter dated 6/16/36, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 9, Folder 61.
87 James Montgomery Flagg letter dated 12/3/35, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 9, Folder 55.
“The League” was to inspire children “to learn more and more of the best that has been thought and done in the world” and to inspire them to strive to hone their talents in art, photography and writing through friendly competition. 88 Most importantly, “The League” was intended to be more than just a competition or a crude display of precociousness. Rather, Paine encouraged children to form League Chapters so that all children -- talented or not -- could participate in the goals of “The League” by solving puzzles, discussing entries and encouraging each other towards intellectual pursuits, patriotism and chivalry towards each other, nature and animals. Membership in “The League” was open to everyone regardless of whether a child subscribed to the magazine or not, and whether they lived in America or abroad. Paine’s primary goal for “The League” was not only to reward childhood talent, but also to train future professionals in art, photography and writing. 89 The tremendous success of “The League” can not be stressed enough. Indeed, Paine’s goal to train future creative professionals can be considered successful if one considers the many talented writers and artists such as E. B. White and Edna St. Vincent Millay who won medals and cash prizes for their childhood submissions.

Paine must be given full credit for the development and maintenance of “The St. Nicholas League.” However, in a letter to E. B. White, dated December 12, 1934, Clarke states that it was he who was responsible for bringing Paine and “The League” to the pages of St. Nicholas.

In the final years of the last century, when I was Associate Editor of ‘St. Nicholas’ Mr. Albert Bigalow Paine was editing a Children’s Page in the New York Herald. As one of its features he had formed a club or organization among its young readers. Both as friend and editor, I was interested in Mr. Paine’s work and when we were dining one

88 Suzanne Rahn, “In the Century’s Springtime: Albert Bigalow Paine and The St. Nicholas League” in Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, eds., 119.
89 Rahn, 121 and 129.
evening, he told me that he was expecting to relinquish his position on the Herald before long, and he expressed real regret over leaving the organization he had founded.  

‘Why not form another on even better lines,’ I asked, ‘and we’ll make it a feature of St. Nicholas? We could make room for it, I am sure, and it would be quite as congenial work for you.’ ‘Well! Why not?’ he answered, evidently liking the idea.  Of course, the final decision to include “The League” in St. Nicholas was left to Dodge, who according to Clarke, “gave her hearty approval.” Dodge had always been reluctant to include features in the magazine that would encourage children to perform. She felt that children should not be pressured into precociousness by adults whose only intention was to display them and their talents. Instead of writing poetry and stories or drawing for display and popularity, Dodge believed that children should concentrate on their studies, have fun and practice their talents for their futures as adults. However at the beginning of St. Nicholas, she was encouraged by John Townsend Trowbridge, former editor of Our Young Folks, to include a “Letterbox” where children’s letters, inquiries and assorted responses could be featured. Dodge conceded to his suggestion. “The Letterbox” became an important tool for her to garner responses from children and for the children to connect to the editors and each other within the pages of their magazine. It was a place where they had a voice. Sometimes Dodge would allow a child’s poem or a drawing to be printed in “The Letterbox.” Despite a few words of praise for the work, she would almost always discourage this kind of display of talent in young people.

Her opinions regarding this matter must have softened throughout her editorship because St. Nicholas increasingly featured writing competitions, puzzle competitions, and often printed poems and other work by children. In September 1880, a new department, “The Young

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90 Copy of letter is in the Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Interview with Clarke, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Box 11, Folder 35.  
91 Copy of letter is in the Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge; Interview with Clarke, Donald and Robert M. Dodge Collection of Mary Mapes Dodge.  
92 Gannon, Rahn and Thompson, eds., 32.
Contributor’s Page,” was introduced by the editors in order to print readers’ submissions. This department did not last long, but its inclusion proves that Dodge’s opinions must have changed in regard to putting childhood talent on display. Perhaps she realized that features that included the child-reader’s voice would increase interest and generate more readership. Or perhaps she realized, like Paine, that features like “The St. Nicholas League” could be used as an educational opportunity to inspire future artists and writers. The relaxing of Dodge’s beliefs regarding childhood precociousness and Clarke’s encouragement brought Paine and St. Nicholas’s most popular department to the magazine.

Roswell Smith

According to a monthly statement dated April 1, 1879, located in the Archives of Charles Scribner and Sons, the editorial staff of St. Nicholas spent $7,771.82 on manuscripts and $10,170.53 on wood-engravings and drawings for the month of March. The record combines the accounts of both magazines being published by Scribner & Company, and indicates that they generated considerable profits for the corporation despite the incredible amount spent to produce them. As I have already noted, from the very beginning St. Nicholas was conceived as a helper in the cultural education program of Scribner’s Monthly. Like the adult magazine, it was to give its readers the best of art and literature with the intention of inspiring them to truth, beauty and proper moral judgment. In his book Reading the Century Illustrated Magazine, Mark J. Noonan discusses the cultural program of Scribner’s/The Century at length. Noonan traces the factors that contributed to Scribner’s/The Century’s success and touches upon the basic cultural goals of the magazine. Despite these lofty goals, he argues that one of the main reasons the magazine

93 Rahn, 129-130
94 Financial Record: Magazine Department Statements, Archives of Charles Scribner’s Sons; Box 715.
was so successful in dominating the field of publishing was because Scribner/Century spent enormous amounts of money to produce the magazine. He cites the index to the first volume, which is worth quoting here:

There are very few who imagine the cost, in labor and money, of works they secure for a comparatively trifling sum. We have paid for illustrations nearly one hundred thousand dollars; for literary contributions and editorial work, a very much larger sum. This statement will give some idea of what it costs to prepare a single number of the magazine for the printer. Thousands of dollars must be expended on each number before a work is placed in type. After this, the expense depends largely upon the number printed. We assure that we paid more than $125,000 to the printers of these ten volumes, and but a little less than a quarter of a million dollars for paper. Consequently, they will realize, first, that publishing a magazine is no child’s play, and, secondly, that they obtain the results of a vast outlay of money and labor for a very small consideration.

By publishing this preface to the first year’s index, it is obvious that Scribner/Century not only wanted to justify its high subscription price of $4.00 a year, but also wanted to assure its readers that they were getting the best product that money could buy. Scribner/Century was well-aware of the conflation of money and culture, and tried to steer their magazines away from the cheap, rude mass-produced products of publishers like Frank Leslie. This preface equates good taste and quality with high cost. It was well-known that Scribner/Century generously paid its authors and artists. Part of the reason for this business practice was to attract the best authors and artists that money could buy. Another reason was that Holland, an author himself, wanted to offer authors a living wage for their work. Whatever the reasons behind this business practice, Scribner/Century was able to produce a quality magazine that was beautifully printed using quality materials, contained copious amounts of fine illustrations, and featured some of the best writing of the nineteenth-century.

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95 Noonan, 7.
96 Noonan, 7.
97 John, 15, 56-57.
When Holland and Smith launched *St. Nicholas* in 1873, the same business model was used. As noted, Dodge was generally left alone to manage *St. Nicholas* as she saw fit. However, the editor and the magazine were still a part of the larger company of Scribner/Century, and therefore, were financially responsible to it. The same business practices used for the production of *Scribner's/The Century* was also used for the production of *St. Nicholas*. Therefore, Scribner/Century spared no expense in publishing the juvenile. Like Holland and Gilder, Dodge was able to generously pay her contributors, often equalling or surpassing the rates offered by the adult magazine. While many of the illustrations were reproduced as less expensive line blocks, *St. Nicholas* featured large numbers of finely wrought wood-engravings, complicated and inventive layouts, experiments in color printing, and by the late 1880s and 1890s, halftones. Finally, the juvenile magazine was printed on quality paper utilizing the most advanced printing techniques by Theodore Low DeVinne, who was a master in his field.

This business model can be traced to Roswell Smith, a wealthy lawyer who inherited coal-rich lands in Indiana from his wife’s family. Smith did not bring the lofty goals of the Genteel Tradition to the partnership of Scribner & Company. He did, however, bring an incredible fortune and the business acumen to successfully promote the ideals of Holland, Gilder and Dodge within the pages of their magazines. He invested both money and time in Scribner & Company in order to help create quality magazines that led the way in periodical publishing. He is credited for organizing the company into separate departments responsible for specific duties. In this way he was able to streamline the publishing process by allowing individuals to concentrate on what they did best.\(^98\) He is also credited for negotiating the price of postal rates.

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\(^98\) Noonan, 7.
with the United States Post Office in order to secure a discounted rate specifically for bulk media mail. By successfully doing so he was able to fold the price of postage into subscription rates, taking the burden off the subscriber.99

Finally, Smith was noted for taking risks, being a good judge of character, and hiring the perfect person for each job. These factors would lead to the successful development and launch of *St. Nicholas*. Beginning in 1870, Smith, knowing that a children’s magazine was being planned by Scribner & Company, systematically acquired competing magazines like *Our Young Folks* and *The Riverside Magazine*, and would continue to do so throughout his tenure with the company. His main goal was to reduce the competition. These mergers also gave Scribner & Company access to the subscription lists, authors and artists of these magazines, giving the newly formed *St. Nicholas* a comfortable position in the market and a valuable artistic resource to mine. Nonetheless, Smith took a considerable risk in launching a new children’s magazine in 1873. A series of stock market crashes caused by inflated speculations would produce an economic depression that would affect much of the industrialized world from 1873 to 1900. Confident in *Scribner’s Monthly*’s success and the financial preparations he made, Smith and Scribner & Company launched *St. Nicholas*.

Arguably, the most important contribution Smith made to *St. Nicholas* was the hiring of Mary Mapes Dodge and allowing her full reign of the new magazine. He gave her the monetary resources that she needed to attract and maintain distinctive contributors and to produce a quality children’s magazine. Furthermore, he incorporated her division into the company as a whole, giving her full access to Drake and those illustrators and authors of Scribner/Century. Without

99 Noonan, 7.
the monetary support from Roswell Smith and Scribner & Co., as well as their complete trust in Dodge’s editorial decision, *St. Nicholas* would have not been as revolutionary or as successful as it was.
Chapter 4: Alexander W. Drake and Theodore Low DeVinne: A Partnership in Visual Perfection

The importance of Alexander W. Drake (1843-1916) and Theodore Low DeVinne (1828-1914) to the production of *St. Nicholas* rests on the fact that Scribner/Century saw its magazines not only as literary magazines, but also as art magazines that participated in the cultural works associated with the Genteel Tradition.¹ As such, it was their goal to introduce the reading public to the best examples of art and aesthetic beauty in order to raise the standards of American taste and inspire the public to goodness, civility and morality. As shown in the last chapter, to be successful in this endeavor it was necessary to have an editorial staff tutored in art and aesthetic appreciation and willing to make art education a primary focus of its editorial goals. It was also necessary to have the money to produce a lavishly illustrated magazine. However, more importantly, it was necessary to have access to the people and technological resources that could make such a magazine a reality. The lofty cultural and aesthetic ideals that Scribner/Century and Dodge had for *St. Nicholas* could only be achieved by the working partnership of Drake and DeVinne.

In their studies of Scribner/Century, Noonan and John argue that the visual components and the high-minded aesthetic program of the magazine was only possible with Drake overseeing the artists and engravers and DeVinne overseeing the printing of the magazine. Both scholars give Drake full credit for the finely wrought, imaginative, and entertaining illustrations done by accomplished artists, meticulously engraved by wood-engravers and then composed and printed in DeVinne’s printing firm. They also give Drake full credit for the perfection of the

photoxylography method of reproduction, which allowed for a more accurate reproduction of an artist’s work. In her book on Theodore Low DeVinne, Irene Tichenor aptly argues that Drake and DeVinne tirelessly worked together to create a superior quality magazine. She demonstrates that Drake and DeVinne -- the art department and the printer -- worked together to create the visual components for the physical object of the magazine.

In these studies, *St. Nicholas* is given a cursory treatment and the scholars concentrate instead on the literary contents and production of the adult magazine. Tichenor conflates *St. Nicholas* together with *Scribner’s/The Century* in her discussion of printing processes and DeVinne’s working methods. The focus of her study is predominately on DeVinne’s life, writing and accomplishments. When Drake or DeVinne are mentioned in studies of *St. Nicholas* it is usually in connection with Dodge’s autocratic editorial control of the contents and look of the magazine. Drake and DeVinne are discussed merely as tangential facts relating to the production of *St. Nicholas*. It can not be stressed enough that Dodge was employed by Scribner/Century, and that the editorial staff of *St. Nicholas* shared the art department with the adult magazine. Therefore, the studies associated with *Scribner’s/The Century* should, in turn, apply to the study of *St. Nicholas*. Nowhere in the above-mentioned studies do the authors either suggest that Drake and DeVinne had an inferior roll in the production of the adult magazine, or do they suggest that the editor maintained a dictatorship over the entire magazine. On the contrary, these scholars argue that while it is true that the editors controlled the focus, style, and

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tone of the magazines to maintain a genteel, Victorian American sensibility, Drake and DeVinne played crucial roles in the production of the magazine. Drake and DeVinne were just as important to *St. Nicholas* as Dodge, if not more so considering the necessary visual and aesthetic program of the final product. According to Clarence Clough Buel:

Drake supplied the taste and steady pressure that forced the advance in printing. His leadership had a threefold quality: to encourage the artist to find in himself un-thought-of resources of truth and beauty, to stimulate the engraver to preserve the tone and feeling of the artist as well as his graphic qualities, and to hold the printer to an adequate conveyance to paper of all that had been gained for art by tireless love and liberal expense.  

As this statement shows, Drake’s position as art director of *St. Nicholas* was neither limited to merely making sure the artists illustrated the literature in an acceptable and exciting way, nor to regulating the production of the wood-engravings. Rather, he was a critical mentor who was proactive in reproduction technologies and who was the driving force in the visual production of Scribner/Century’s magazines. To his position he brought an extensive knowledge of art and aesthetics, important connections within the art world, and a proven ability in draftsmanship.

Obviously, without DeVinne the physical object of the Scribner/Century magazines would cease to exist or would not exist in their superior printed states. In 1872, Scribner/Century utilized four other printers for their magazine while also employing DeVinne’s firm Francis Hart & Co. to print some of their illustrations. By 1873 DeVinne was exclusively printing *St. Nicholas*, and by 1874 added *Scribner’s Monthly* to his firm’s roster. As John points out, “Technically and artistically, [DeVinne] was probably the foremost printer of his time in the United States,” it was through him that Scribner/Century’s magazine secured the position as “the

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best-printed magazine in the world,” and it was because DeVinne was “versed in the oldest
secrets of his craft, he kept abreast of the latest technical developments.” Through his use of
overlays to tease out the tonality in wood-engravings, his embrace of process printing and his
active participation in typographical design, DeVinne endeavored to raise the standards of
American printing. Luckily for Scribner/Century, he utilized the pages of their magazines to do
so.

Alexander W. Drake

Before *St. Nicholas* became a viable part of the Scribner & Co. roster, Alexander W.
Drake was hired by Roswell Smith in 1870 to be the superintendent of the newly formed art
department for *Scribner’s Magazine*. Drake began his career as a wood-engraver and an oil and
watercolor painter. Born near Westfield, New Jersey, he showed artistic talent at a young age.
As a young adult, he studied drawing with the German-born illustrator, August Will, wood-
engraving with John W. Orr of New York City, and took night classes at Cooper Union in order
to improve his draftsmanship. Once he mastered the skills necessary, he became a student at the
National Academy of Design where he was subjected to a more traditional course of study within
a fine-art academy structure. There he made significant friendships with other artists, including
Augustus Saint-Gaudens, with whom he kept close contact throughout his life.7

At the age of twenty-five, he established his own wood-engraving business in New York
City. He not only engraved the wood blocks, but he often provided the drawings upon the blocks
for other engravers.8 This dual knowledge of the illustration process and wood-engraving made

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6 John, 80, 181.
8 Clarke (1916), 548.
him particularly sensitive to the specific demands of illustration and its reproduction for print.

He understood the frustration of illustrators who claimed that the engraver ignored their artistic expression and often bastardized the initial drawing made upon the block. He also understood the frustration of the engraver who often had to work from muddled blocks that were corrected and freely drawn without any additional reference. This eventually led him to experiment with photo-chemical processes in his quest to preserve the artistic intentions of an artist and to aid the engraver in accurately reproducing these intentions. As many contemporaneous commentators have mentioned in postmortem memorials, Drake was a kind and generous mentor, but he was also a detail-oriented idealist who was involved in every aspect of the creation and printing of the image and who made sure that all who were involved in this process strove for perfection. It was precisely these qualities that made him an attractive candidate to Smith and Holland for the position of art director in charge of the art department for the newly established Scribner & Co., a subsidiary of Charles Scribner’s publishing house. At the age of thirty he was in complete control of the art, layouts and wood-engraving for *Scribner’s Monthly* and three years later, *St. Nicholas*.

Art departments for magazine publishing were virtually unheard of in the United States before the Civil War. The growth of pictorial magazines like *Scribner’s Monthly* in the postbellum period created the need for a specific department to oversee the enormous amount of imagery, wood-engraving and complicated visual layouts necessary for the completion of these illustrated periodicals. It became necessary to have a single department that could hire artists who could meet short publishing deadlines with clearly drafted images that were superiorly drawn on wood blocks. It also became necessary for one department to keep track of the
continuous flow of the numerous wood blocks that went out to individual wood-engravers or engraving firms and that were ideally returned within a designated time in order to meet editorial deadlines. Finally, the superior quality of the printing of these periodicals and their increased print-runs demanded that one department work closely with the printer in order to assure that both high standards and increased printing numbers were being met.

The separation of tasks according to specialization into individual departments also reflected the growing professionalization of American authors, artists, wood-engravers, editors and printers. As already discussed, Scribner/The Century, was one of the first magazine companies to implement departmental specialization. This business model was a more efficient and progressive one than previous models, and led to *Scribner’s/The Century’s* eventual dominance amongst the quality magazines. This separation allowed each member of the staff to fully concentrate on the task for which he or she was most suited or trained. When *St. Nicholas* was launched as the younger member of Scribner & Co.’s magazine roster, the organization of Dodge’s staff and the separation of tasks followed the example set by the adult magazine. However, instead of developing its own art department, it shared that of *Scribner’s Monthly*. This gave Dodge access to an already established pool of professional artists and engravers who had already proven their superior talent in the pages of the adult magazine. Most importantly, Dodge had access to a kindred spirit in Drake who, like her, demanded perfection for her juvenile magazine and who shared her cultural circles and ideals.

Scholars point to the fact that Drake worked very closely with Dodge on the editorial process that included her approval or changes to galleys, images and page layouts. They argue

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9 Noonan, xii.
that Dodge had final editorial say in the visual components of the magazine, often censoring images that would have otherwise offended genteel Victorian-American tastes. Gannon and Thompson suggest that Dodge even took a creative role in the early years of the magazine which included co-designing the original cover with her cousin, Gus Wetmore. Indeed, as I have already argued, Dodge was an active participant in the visual and cultural construction and focus of *St. Nicholas*. She brought to the magazine her own art and aesthetic training, preferences and ideology; however, this is not the whole story. By giving Dodge autocratic control over the magazine, scholars of *St. Nicholas* ignore the fact that Drake and, as we shall see, Theodore Low DeVinne were responsible for giving her the galleys, images and page proofs that she would later correct or approve. Before the illustrations were given to Dodge for editing and censorship, Drake had already hired, trained, coaxed, criticized, edited and praised the illustrators and their illustrations. Before the image concepts or page proofs even got to Dodge, they had already gone through rigorous editing, correcting and proof-printing. While Dodge rarely made corrections to the page layouts, she did actively censor images that did not adhere to her strict, moralistic standards. For example, she objected to Dan Beard’s depiction of the characters’ bare feet in the illustrations for Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, published in volume 21, 1894, and outright rejected an image of a boy swimming for excessive nudity.

Drake’s associations with Cooper Union and the National Academy of Design led him to a teaching position at Cooper Union where he taught drawing at the age of thirty. Previously, as an owner and master of an engraving firm he would have had men apprenticed to him in order to

12 Mapes, 257.
learn the craft.\textsuperscript{13} This teaching experience came with him to the art department offices of Scribner/Century where he would provide illustrators and engravers with critical guidance and instruction. In the first years of the magazines’ publication, Drake personally trained the artists how to draw in reverse upon the prepared woodblock for the engravers.\textsuperscript{14} From what little is written about him, which is mostly recollections from those who worked with him, Drake was a generous and gentle man who provided the artists and engravers who worked with him the guidance and training necessary for them to do their best work for \textit{Scribner's/The Century} and \textit{St. Nicholas}. His mentorship went beyond that of just a teacher, for he was known to:

give assistance of every sort -- advice, encouragement, patient, kindly criticism, and financial aid -- which he gave to artists and others in depression or necessity, no one knows, or ever will know, the full record of his benefactions. “Think of the helping hand he has held out to hundreds of struggling young beginners in art and letters!” writes a grateful member of his corps of illustrators.\textsuperscript{15}

It was necessary for the art superintendent to train artists in the methods and style of illustration for a specific magazine simply because many of them neither understood the wood-engraving process, nor understood the requirements of illustrating for a certain audience. Through the basic training, criticism and guidance received from Drake the artists were tutored in the look and feel of \textit{Scribner's Monthly}. In addition, they went through the editorial censoring of Dr. Holland and Gilder before they produced art for \textit{St. Nicholas} and Dodge. This aesthetic and moral-based training was not irrelevant to the editorial process because it meant that artists


\textsuperscript{14} Johns, 77.

knew the magazine’s stylistic and content guidelines before submitting their work, making for a more streamlined process of reproduction and editing.

By providing training to the artists and illustrators who worked for him, Drake reversed the line of cultural influence from that of the socio-cultural macrosom inward towards the magazine, to that of the microcosm outward towards the greater art world through the active teaching of young artists in the accepted style of the Scribner/Century. This duality of influence allowed the cultural program of St. Nicholas not only to reach and hopefully teach its audience aesthetic and art appreciation, but it also molded a core of professional and beginning artists in current trends in art and of accepted styles in magazine layouts. In this way, the magazine’s art education was not limited to disseminating information about fine art, but also included more subtle methods of aesthetic education as found in the design of the magazine and the training of young artists.

Drake’s involvement in the American art scene went beyond professional positions. He became one of New York’s most respected and noteworthy critics. Drake was also a collector of art, artistic objects and oddities such as model ships, American embroidery samplers and colorful pieces of printed paper. His collection was noted for being both exquisite for its color and quality, yet pedestrian and everyday because of its contents. Visitors to his home admired the artistic way in which he displayed his collections and the whimsy associated with the bits and baubles that were tucked away with the more serious art.16

As a critic and as a collector of art and aesthetic objects, Drake was in constant contact with fellow artists, collectors and sellers of art and objects. Like Dodge, Drake’s associations

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16 Clarke (1916), 550-551; Clarence Clough Buel, 73.
with the American art scene molded his aesthetic knowledge and kept him aware of current artistic trends. This, in turn, influenced the style of art work and page layout he developed for St. Nicholas in two ways. First, as Clarke points out, his “rare taste and skill in selecting subjects and illustrators” had a direct impact on the look and feel of the magazine because his selections were filtered through his own artistic preferences.\(^{17}\) During the decades associated with Dodge’s editorship and Drake’s position as art director, the style of the art and design in St. Nicholas kept pace with that of the American art scene. I will discuss this at greater length in chapter 6 as I demonstrate the correlation between the style of art and design found in St. Nicholas and the styles associated with the American Renaissance, including Beaux-Arts traditions, English Aestheticism and Japanese exoticism.

Secondly, like Dodge’s habit of mining her cultural circles for contributors, Drake mined his own circles for artists and engravers for Scribner/Century’s magazines. As Clarke points out:

Mr. Drake has been identified with many other important art movements in this country during the past thirty-five years. In all these varied organizations, as well as in his association with painters and sculptors, he was held in especial regard as an art critic of trained discrimination, rare taste, and ripe experience, and he was repeatedly selected to serve on special juries and committees for projected exhibitions or art publications.\(^{18}\)

The relationships he forged, both in his position as critic and collector and as a teacher of drawing at Cooper Union, brought him into constant contact with new artists and people who were influential in the American art world. These artistic relationships and the circles to which they belonged provided Drake with an incredible pool of talent to mine for new contributors.

Not surprisingly, Drake’s cultural circles overlapped those of Dodge, which helps to confirm Clarke’s observation that Dodge’s staff, and by extension Scribner/Century’s staff, was

\(^{17}\) Clarke (1906), 548.
\(^{18}\) Clarke (1906), 549.
more like a family of like minds. Those who worked for Dodge, or for the company as a whole, were trusted to maintain a certain level of professionalism, to strive for idealized perfection in their craft, and to promote the Genteel cultural program of enrichment and aesthetic education. This was easily possible when the members of the team shared cultural and educational ideals and social and professional circles.

Drake’s direct influence on St. Nicholas’s art and aesthetic design is best demonstrated in his daily working methods, which included constant contact with his illustrators, wood-engravers, DeVinne, and others associated with the art work, page layout and design, reproduction of imagery, editors and final printing of the magazine. According to Clarence Clough Beul, Drake began his day at DeVinne’s printing establishment where he would inspect the print runs from the night before and any proofs needing his approval. He would correct any mistakes and would often be seen with DeVinne at the presses laboring to make the printed image as close to the original artwork as possible. Together they would experiment with new technologies and printing methods in order to obtain perfection in the printed image.

Many of these experiments, including those associated with the photo-chemical processes of reproduction, were undocumented in order to keep their methods, recipes, and developments exclusive to the company. Drake and DeVinne experimented with tissue overlays, different inks, calendared papers, and photo-chemical processing that would lead to line blocks and later, halftones. Drake’s active role in the reproduction and printing process ensured that the artists’ work would keep its tonal and linear integrity, that the page layouts and design would match the

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19 Gannon and Thompson, 110-111.
20 Clarence Clough Beul, 69. Also see Tichenor, 38; John, 80-81.
high expectations of Scribner/Century and Dodge, and that the magazine-object would be printed clearly and precisely to his and DeVinne’s standards.

After his morning visit to the printers, Drake would then review artists’ initial sketches, make any necessary corrections and then meet with them to discuss these corrections. Once the drawings were completed to his exacting satisfaction he would then meet with Dodge or, more often, Clarke to discuss the image’s initial concept and appropriateness for the *St. Nicholas* audience. This process would repeat itself until he received approval from the editors. Once the approval was granted, Drake and his team of illustrators and engravers went about creating the final imagery and layouts. Once the wood block was engraved, Drake would do a test print and would provide corrections, criticism and encouragement to the wood-engraver. This was done until the engraving produced a clear and precise image. Drake would then oversee the final page design and layout which would be then be electrotyped. After 1885 this would be done in DeVinne’s printing facility.\(^{21}\) Finally, initial proof pages would be pulled and corrected by Drake and DeVinne before the galleys were sent to Dodge, Clarke and her staff for correction or approval. Drake’s process of constant correction, criticism, appraisal and mentoring allowed him to create a near-perfect final galley for Dodge and her editorial staff to review. From the moment Dodge gave Drake the story to be illustrated to the final layout and galley production, Drake, DeVinne and their staff were more involved in the production of the magazine as an object than was Dodge and her staff. Therefore, it can be argued that the physical manifestation of the object was left almost exclusively in the hands of Drake and his staff of artists and engravers, and DeVinne and his staff of compositors, electrotypers and printers.

\(^{21}\) Tichenor, 112.
As noted briefly above, the most important contribution that Drake made to Scribner/Century and to the reproduction of imagery in general was the use of photography to transfer images onto the wood-block in preparation for the engraver. Like most professionals involved in the printing of imagery for consumer consumption, Drake spent his life experimenting with processes that would make it easier, more accurate, faster and cheaper to reproduce illustrations and photos. Like others in his field, he turned to the camera and chemical processing as primary methods in this venture. He was particularly interested in the process of photoxylography.\(^{22}\) Photoxylography is the process by which a photograph is directly developed onto a woodblock that has been coated with a light-sensitive gelatin. The photograph could either be a traditional photograph, or it could be a photograph of a drawing or painting. Once the photo is developed on the woodblock, the block is then given to the engravers to be engraved. The benefit of this process is that the original work of art can be retained and used for reference, thus eliminating many of the complaints that illustrators had regarding engravers altering their work. The problem with previous procedures was that the artist originally had to draw on the block itself, or had to rely on an intermediary to transfer the work onto the block. In both cases the original artwork was destroyed in the process and the engraver was left to interpret the artist’s work without a reference. Some scholars attribute the invention of the process of photoxylography to Drake and Scribner & Company, while others argue that he only perfected a method that was already in use but produced inferior quality images.\(^{23}\) Regardless of whether Drake invented the

\(^{22}\) Note: All processes and materials mentioned in this chapter will be discussed at length in chapter five.

\(^{23}\) Noonan, 17; John, 77; Scribner & Co. claimed that they were the ones who invented the process as stated in Tichenor, 57. However, Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene: Social History* (New York: Macmillan, 1942): 422-23, argues that patents for this process were granted to Robert Price in 1857 and C. B. Boyle in 1859.
process or perfected the process, he was an avid supporter of the use of the camera as a method to obtain a more accurate representation of the original image.

The result of Drake’s experimentation with photo-chemical processes leading to the perfection of photoxylography for high-capacity, commercial printing was two-fold. First and most importantly, the image that was developed on the block was a perfect replica of the original drawing, retaining its lines and tonal values if any. The original drawing was not destroyed in the process and, therefore, the engravers had a reference while they worked. This allowed the wood-engravers to produce not only an accurate facsimile of the original work, but forced them to develop more sophisticated engraving techniques to capture the intricate lines and tonal values produced on the block. Secondly, this process liberated the illustrator from drawing on the woodblock, allowing him or her to produce art in any medium and in any size. This freedom of expression inspired extremely artistic and sophisticated layouts and images within the pages of *St. Nicholas* simply because the art department and printer now had the technological tools for this kind of work. Drake’s constant experimentation also led him to other forms of process printing including line block, photogravure, and halftone, which often led to hybrid methods. When observing the hybrid images under a loupe, it is extremely difficult to ascertain the type of process used in reproducing this image simply because the revelatory signs of the various processes are blended together or have been dramatically reworked.

The most significant result of photoxylography is that it allowed wood-engravers to break free from an old style of engraving promoted by William James Linton (1812-1897) and his followers. This old style of engraving dictated that each line and marking was specific for a
certain element within the image. During their apprenticeship, a wood- engraver would not only be taught the physical methods of engraving, but would also be taught this linear language and would be trained to master specific elements like portraits, landscapes and narratives. Therefore, both the mastery of the wood-engraving process and the visual language associated with it was perpetuated by the apprenticeship system. Often artists would provide the engraver with only the mere suggestion of a drawing, leaving the engraver to interpret the artist’s intentions through this set vocabulary of lines. This practice is best described in the reminiscences of A. V. S. Anthony:

Wallin, the artist, said to me, “My lines and pencilling are merely suggestive to the engraver, as he of necessity knows or should know more than I about the value of lines.” Schell says, “Let the engraver, if he be a good one, follow the spirit rather than the letter of my drawing.” Fenn says, “I am not drawing lines for the printing press. I furnish the form and color, and it is entirely in the province of the engraver to so render these that the result in black and white spaces shall give the public an idea of my conception.”

These statements show that many illustrators were perfectly content with the engraver’s methods of transferring their drawings. The engravers, in turn, were trained to interpret an artist’s drawing, thereby giving the engraver more expressive power. This power struggle between engraver and artist can be seen in the signatures found in a printed image or displayed alongside the image. Following the tradition of copper engraving, before the postbellum period in America it was common to see only the signature of the engraver and not that of the artist because the engraver brought the image to print and was, therefore, more important. With some well-known

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25 See Wagner, 143-167.
26 A. V. S. Anthony, 16.
exceptions, like that of illustrators F. O. C. Darley and Thomas Nast, the engraver received the credit and were usually paid more.

With the development of photoxylography and the resulting transfer of line and tonality to the wood-block, young engravers, most notably Timothy Cole, promoted a new method of engraving based on the meticulous rendering of an almost perfect facsimile of the original art work. Facsimile wood-engraving utilized line and stippling to recreate the complicated varieties of tone, texture and line of an artist’s painting or of a photograph. The lines and marks that a facsimile wood-engraver utilized did not follow a set pattern or language and freed engravers to work in any method they saw fit. As a result, the engraver’s toolbox expanded to include a variety of burins and the roulette wheel that could facilitate the expressive process of reproducing tone and the suggestion of colors in black and white.

Dubbed “The New School” of American wood-engraving, the majority of these engravers worked for Scribner/Century under the guidance of Drake who fully supported this progressive method of wood-engraving. The most important innovators of this new method of engraving, Cole, Frederick Juengling, and Gustave Kruell, can be found time and again within the pages of St. Nicholas and Scribner's/The Century. Cole was considered the leader of “The New School” of wood-engraving because it was he who continuously strove for more intricate, detailed and expressive methods to capture the nuances of an artists’ work, thereby raising the technical standards for other engravers. In addition, he was also the most outspoken of the group and his essays and lectures on the subject were published. In his writing and lectures, he stated that

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27 Timothy Cole, 25-32.
28 A. V. S, Anthony, 12.
29 Wagner, 146.
wood-engraving was merely a reproductive method to create an exact facsimile of an artist’s work. He denounced the arguments made by those of “The Old School,” who claimed that wood-engraving was an elite craft practiced by specifically trained practitioners who must follow age-old techniques. Instead, Cole maintained that the engraver should use any method, line or mark available in order to produce a perfect facsimile, thereby maintaining the autonomy of the artist. Through the facsimile method of engraving, the artist became more prominent because the wood-engraver strove to keep every line or brushstroke, tone and expression true to the artist’s touch. Artists’ growing importance can be seen in the regular inclusion of their names in tables of contents of books and magazines, and in the predominance of their signatures in printed images. As John points out:

The new process could re-create not merely the line but the shades and textures of brush or crayon work of originals, regardless of size. This technique opened the way for the best artists of the time to contribute to the magazine without the risk of having their work misrepresented in reproduction.

Drake’s support of photoxylography and his other experiments with photo-chemical processes paved the way for the what would be called The Golden Age of American Illustration. Drake’s efforts lead Joseph Pennell to declare, “‘Mr. Drake has done more for the advancement of illustrations than any man living.’”

Drake’s innovation raised the status of wood-engraving to the level of an art form in America, and Scribner’s/The Century’s periodicals were recognized as leaders in the field.

Because of its new status as “art,” generated by the supporters of “The New School” of

31 John, 78.
32 Clarke (1916), 549, John, 77.
33 John, 76-77, 80.
engraving and by the engravers themselves, wood-engraving took an important place in art education as determined by the cultural elite of the Genteel Tradition. As compared to wood-engravings, lithographs were aligned with notions of cheaper production, the uncivilized classes and the bastardization of pictorial expression and, therefore, not appropriate for true artistic appreciation. The custodians of culture like Richard Watson Gilder and Clarence Cooke preferred wood-engraving over lithography because of the amount of professional training it took to become a wood-engraver, and the work and perceived technical artistry that went into carving the block. They considered wood-engraving as an art form to be appreciated for itself and its own unique qualities.

Under the guidance of Drake, “The New School” of engraving dominated much of the three decades of Dodge’s editorship. The details obtained by the practitioners of “The New School” of engraving are unbelievably sophisticated to the point that a magnifying loupe is necessary to distinguish the methods used for reproduction. The intricacy of the engraved surface became a printer’s and electrotyper’s nightmare, as the fine carving neither readily lent itself to the electrotyping processes, nor produced a clear and clean printed image. Most printers like DeVinne were using the wet method of printing with a planar press. This method utilized a matte, wood pulp paper that was slightly moistened before the inked plate was pressed onto it. The type of ink used and the simplicity of line used by “The Old School” of wood-engravers were perfectly suited to this method. Unfortunately, the innovative blocks produced by “The New School” of wood-engraving were too complicated and fine to be reproduced using this method. Many electrotype companies were not prepared or equipped for the challenges of

processing such finely engraved blocks. For example, Cole was sent to Europe by The Century Company to create wood-engravings after the original masterpieces of European paintings. These were reproduced for an art historical series called “The Old Masters Series,” which was printed in *The Century Magazine* throughout the 1880s, 1890s and into the early 1900s. Cole reported in his letters to Drake and his assistant, Fraser, that he was having trouble finding someone skilled enough to satisfactorily electrotype his blocks in Europe. He could not send the actual blocks to DeVinne, who perfected the electrotyping process for the complicated blocks, because they were subjected to steep duties while plates were not. As a result, Cole was required to have his blocks electrotyped by a facility in France that proved to be satisfactory.35

Drake and DeVinne worked together in developing processes that could capture the complicated and nuanced surfaces of the facsimile wood-engravings. DeVinne oversaw the electrotyping of each plate, which was done in his printing facility. As already noted, Drake was a daily visitor to the facility in order to inspect all plates and test prints so that they would meet his and Dodge’s exacting standards. Drake was aware that his engravers posed a challenge for DeVinne’s employees; however, he was also confident that their mutual standards of excellence would produce a superior product. When necessary, the electrotyped plate would be modified by hand in order that the complicated tonalities and intricacies of line would be clearly printed throughout the entire run. As will be discussed, DeVinne also utilized tissue overlays with the intention of recreating the complicated tonalities of the original illustration.36

36 Tichenor, 60-61; 112-113.
As will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter, Drake was also responsible for the experimentation in photo-chemical processes that would lead to the extensive use of line block and the eventual use of halftones within the pages of *St. Nicholas*. William Lewis Fraser gives a sense of the kind of processes with which the art department was experimenting in a letter to Timothy Cole, then in Florence, dated June 8, 1886:

> I do not know whether in Florence you see the great strides that process reproduction is making. The photogravure seems to give an almost absolute facsimile of the original, albeit to me an uninteresting one.

> The new process of photography painting (I refer to the azaline) seems to give all the qualities of the original, save and except the color. The relief processes, modifications of the Mezanbach and Ives methods, are making great strides, and it looks as though in the course of a year or two it will be possible to print with type by these methods, very faithful reproductions of paintings …

Process printing would become cheaper, easier and less time-consuming than wood-engraving. By the turn of the century it would replace wood-engraving as the reproductive means for illustration and photography, thereby making the profession of wood-engraver obsolete. In response -- and perhaps sensing the impending extinction of wood-engraving -- Timothy Cole wrote to Fraser, Drake’s assistant, on January 26, 1893:

> I should like to see *The Century* make a stand against “process,” because only in engraving can the peculiar quality and power of black and white be demonstrated. You can make the pages of the magazine glitter with a finer luster than they have yet shown, by encouraging engraving in every possible way. It must be evident to you that the “more ordinary men” will die out entirely, if they are deprived of that class of work that you now give to “process.”

Within two decades, the incredible virtuosity demonstrated by “The New School” of wood-engraving would be replaced by a camera and process printing.

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37 Cole and Cole, 58.
38 Cole and Cole, 96.
One of the most important innovations for the printing of intricate imagery to come out of
the partnership between Drake and DeVinne was the invention of calendared paper. Calendared
paper is a special paper that is coated with a fine, white clay and machine buffed until completely
smooth. Much like the hot-press, glossy magazine paper of today, calendared paper could be
printed upon when dry and could readily take finely detailed plates as in the case of the facsimile
wood-blocks and halftones. By 1876 DeVinne was utilizing calendared paper in both *Scribner’s
Monthly* and *St. Nicholas* in order to print the detailed wood-engraved frontispieces found in
these magazines. It can be argued that calendared paper becomes necessary to the production of
these magazines and their high standards of excellence because of Drake’s successful perfection
of photo-chemical process printing. As will be further discussed in the next chapter, by 1880 *St.
Nicholas* was completely printed with calendared paper, creating a very modern-feeling and
wonderfully smooth magazine that was coherent throughout each volume. The images and text
printed on the calendared paper were much more clear and crisp, making for a aesthetically
pleasing unified object. Unfortunately, by 1890 Drake and DeVinne opted to print only the finer,
more detailed wood-engravings and halftones on calendared paper, leaving the rest of the
magazine to be printed on the rotary web press utilizing matte, wood-pulp paper. The coherent
nature of the magazine was lost and the flow of *St. Nicholas* feels interrupted and disjointed. The
probable reason behind introducing the mix of papers and printing processes was to keep up with
*St. Nicholas’s* growing readership while keeping the costs down.

This technological advance, along with those of the rotary and web presses and the
photo-chemical processes, allowed Drake and DeVinne to quickly and accurately produce a

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39 Tichenor, 83-84.
sumptuously illustrated magazine for public consumption. Drake’s daily involvement in all aspects of design and production allowed him to maintain and, at times, surpass the high standards set for *St. Nicholas*. John states that the wood-engraved illustrations in *St. Nicholas* and in *Scribner’s Monthly* [*The Century*] became famous worldwide:

The fame of the wood engravings in *Scribner’s* [and in turn *St. Nicholas*] was by then international. Roswell Smith, touring Europe in 1879, was “astonished to find the estimation in which Scribner’s art work is held [and] the desire of everybody to contribute to it.”  

Adding to this statement, John argues:

Critical praise for the art work in the early numbers was nearly unanimous, and within a few years the press saluted the monthly’s illustrations as unrivaled in the magazine field, while London observers called them the equal of the best work in Europe.

This is a significant compliment bestowed upon an American publication because only a few decades earlier American culture was being questioned by international cultural critics. Drake’s training as an artist and wood-engraver, his insistence on perfection, and his knowledge of art and technology made him a significant part of Dodge’s team. It can even be argued that Drake was the most important influence on the look, feel and visual impact of the *St. Nicholas*.

**Theodore Low DeVinne: Printing *St. Nicholas***

A discussion of Alexander W. Drake and his contribution to *St. Nicholas* is practically impossible without mentioning Theodore Low DeVinne, the printer of *St. Nicholas* for approximately forty-four years. This is because, as I have already discussed, the art superintendent and the printer worked closely together in order to produce the magazine

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41 John, 77.
according to the demanding standards of the publishing company and its editors. Both men regularly spent time together outside of *St. Nicholas* and *Scribner’s/The Century*, frequenting social events that were rooted in art and printing. As a result of their close professional and social ties, they were among the group of men who founded The Grolier Club and were members of various other clubs together.\(^{42}\) DeVinne and Drake were responsible for numerous technological advances in the production of *St. Nicholas* and its parent magazine, including the development of a variety of photo-chemical processes to reproduce illustrations and the use of calendared paper for the dry printing of intricate wood-engravings, line engraving and halftones. Most importantly, it was their tireless commitment to quality and the production of an aesthetically pleasing product that drove them together in their shared quest.

When in November 1873, the first issue of *St. Nicholas* was published, the reverse of its title page bore the imprint of Francis Hart & Co., the printers of the newly launched magazine. Theodore Low DeVinne came to work for Francis Hart as a compositor in 1850. By 1851 he was promoted to the position of foreman of the compositors and also managed the entire printing shop. After some negotiation, Hart made DeVinne a partner in 1858, giving him one-third of the ownership of the company. DeVinne paid Hart $5000 with interest for this privilege.\(^{43}\) Originally, Hart’s printing shop dealt mostly with small commercial and private jobs, including personal stationary and timetables and tickets for the growing travel industry. Under DeVinne’s management, the printing shop expanded its business to include the printing of books and illustrated catalogues that required fine wood-engravings. DeVinne’s experimentation and quest for excellence in quality had results: in 1865 the American Institute, a yearly trade and

\(^{42}\) Tichenor, 96-97, 68-69.
\(^{43}\) Tichenor, 22.
agricultural fair, awarded Francis Hart & Co. a silver medal for excellence.\textsuperscript{44} By the late 1860s, the company had branched out into the field of illustrated magazine printing, a move that would eventually lead it into a forty-four year contract with Scribner/Century to produce its two highly illustrated periodicals and a variety of fine illustrated books.

It is easy to assume that DeVinne was under the guidance of Hart and that Hart controlled all of the business. This cannot be further from the truth. While Hart owned two-thirds of the company, it was DeVinne who was actively running the firm and overseeing the actual printing jobs.\textsuperscript{45} In 1877 Francis Hart died leaving instructions in his will as to how DeVinne could acquire his two-thirds of the business and the total control of the company. The will required that DeVinne create a $40,000 fund for Hart’s widow, pay all legacies and debts, and continue business in partnership with Hart’s estate for six years before he could take over the business. By 1883, all debts were paid and DeVinne created a new firm, Theodore L. DeVinne & Co., which he managed fully.\textsuperscript{46}

According to Tichenor, Francis Hart & Co. seemed to be in contract with Scribner & Company as early as 1872, a year before it became the sole printer of \textit{St. Nicholas}. Scribner & Company utilized multiple printers to print \textit{Scribner’s Monthly} including Pool & Maclauchean, New York Printing Co., Pelletreau & Raynor, and William H. Cadwell. However, in 1872 Francis Hart & Co. was printing \textit{illustrations} for Scribner & Company and by 1874 was contracted to print the entire magazine.\textsuperscript{47} Obviously, Dodge had her choice of Scribner’s printers, but she chose Francis Hart & Co. as her printer. Undoubtedly, it was the quality of

\textsuperscript{44} Tichenor, 32.
\textsuperscript{45} Tichenor, 37.
\textsuperscript{46} Tichenor, 64.
\textsuperscript{47} Tichenor, 37.
printing, particularly that of illustrations, that attracted Dodge to DeVinne and Francis Hart & Co..

The history surrounding the contract is well told, but is worth mentioning. Hart was in Europe when Scribner & Company approached DeVinne about printing St. Nicholas. DeVinne wrote to the senior partner with regards to the matter. Hart instructed DeVinne not to take the commission because he doubted the firm’s ability to keep up with the large print run of the type of magazine modeled after Scribner's Monthly. Hart’s letter came too late, DeVinne had already taken the commission and signed the contract. Two years later Scribner & Company gave Francis Hart & Co. the contract to exclusively print Scribner’s Monthly. By 1874, the printing firm’s main business was the printing of Scribner’s/The Century’s periodicals and would remain so for forty-four years.

Tichenor argues that DeVinne was also apprehensive about printing St. Nicholas. Although it did not start with such a large circulation, throughout its long run St. Nicholas averaged a circulation of approximately 60,000. Each month the magazine was 50 to 80 pages long, included advertisements, averaged 30-90 images a number, contained multiple complicated page layouts, and had a printed pictorial cover. This large volume of complicated work would take an enormous amount of time and labor. Unlike his partner, DeVinne seemed confident that their firm could handle the large job. The quality of work demanded by Scribner & Company and Drake on such a large volume of print runs was not an issue for DeVinne either. He was already accustomed to working with Drake on printing some of the illustrations for Scribner’s Monthly, and therefore he was well aware of the amount of tedious work St. Nicholas would

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48 Tichenor, 35-38.
49 Tichenor, 37.
demand. He also knew the cost of such work and doubted its profitability. However, as already discussed, Scribner & Company, under the financial leadership of Roswell Smith, was willing to pay top dollar for quality work, including the printing of its magazines by an accomplished printer using the best materials. By 1874, DeVinne had proved to Scribner & Company that his firm could successfully print large runs at high quality, which led Scribner to give Francis Hart & Co. the contract to print *Scribner’s Monthly*.

This arrangement was mutually beneficial to both Scribner & Company and DeVinne. For Scribner and, in turn, Dodge and *St. Nicholas*, the partnership with DeVinne brought two innovative perfectionists together, Drake and DeVinne. Their partnership made it possible to bring finely printed and technologically superior images and layouts to a picture-hungry public.

The Civil War had initiated the rage for pictorial journalism in America. As John points out, “The newspapers of the postwar period markedly increased their pictorial features, and illustrations in books, once exceptional, became the rule.” In addition, the publication of both *Scribner’s Monthly* and *St. Nicholas* coincided with the increase in the public’s interest in fine art which led to the establishment of institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which opened in 1872. As already discussed, the interest in the arts was more than just a source of entertainment. For the cultural custodians of the Genteel Tradition, public access to art and beautiful things would have a positive affect on the viewer and on society as a whole. An appreciation for the right kind of art and for the beautiful would “produce spiritual uplift and ‘right feeling’,” and art itself “should look on ‘the good, the true, and the beautiful’ and direct

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50 Tichenor, 37.
51 John, 76.
people to a higher, purer realm.” As discussed, Dodge and Scribner & Company most certainly considered *St. Nicholas* a method both to inspire children and their families to “spiritual uplift and ‘right feeling’” by providing them with the finest examples of art, and be a tool to provide art and aesthetic education for this cultural purpose. The professional expertise of Drake and DeVinne would prove to be crucial in Scribner’s and Dodge’s quest to be cultural custodians. Their partnership and innovation would propel *St. Nicholas* and its parent magazine to the forefront of magazine publishing, would help develop the “American School of wood-engraving,” and would develop techniques that would herald the Golden Age of American Illustration.

The partnership was also beneficial to DeVinne, who by 1877 was the sole proprietor of Francis Hart & Co. For forty-four years his firm printed magazines for Scribner/ *Century*, and printed various illustrated books for The Century Company. DeVinne’s arrangement with them provided him with steady work and a steady income for his entire working life. It is no coincidence that after The Century pulled its business from DeVinne in the first decade of the twentieth-century the firm struggled to maintain financial stability. The contract with Scribner/ *Century* and his thorough training of his staff through apprenticeships and self-published labor manuals allowed DeVinne the free time to pursue his involvement in various professional clubs and organizations like the Typographical Society and the Grolier Club. He was also able to

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52 Noonan, 18.
53 Noonan, xiii; John, 80-81.
54 Noonan, 16; John, 77.
55 Tichenor, 163-165. According to Tichenor, by the early part of the twentieth-century *The Century Magazine* was in financial decline while *St. Nicholas* remained financially stable. Part of the reason for this was that *The Century* found itself in direct competition with cheaper magazines that concentrated less on literary offerings and more on sensational articles illustrated with halftones of illustrations and photographs. In response to the new competition, the editors doubled-down on their nineteenth-century standards. They tried to keep the magazine afloat by cutting corners and that included scrutinizing DeVinne Press’s bills. Unsatisfied with the high cost of printing and binding, the editors shopped around for a cheaper printer.
dedicate himself to intellectual pursuits like lecturing on and writing about the history of printing in the Western world, the methods of printing and type development, and the artful printing of modern books. His intellectual and professional pursuits were inspired by his desire to raise the quality of printing in America and set professional standards for the industry.

In 1885, his exclusive contract with Scribner/Century led to the construction of an enormous, made-to-order printing establishment on the corner of Lafayette Place and Fourth Street in Manhattan.\textsuperscript{56} Paid for by both Roswell Smith and DeVinne, the building was constructed to handle an increase in printing and to take care of all aspects of printing for publishing, including an electrotype foundry and various printing methods. Most importantly, it shared a block with the new offices of Scribner/Century, which allowed for an ease of access between the two firms. The proximity of the firms to each other and the fact that Smith co-funded the building indicates just how intertwined the interests of DeVinne and Scribner/The Century were. Finally, the high quality of printing DeVinne did for Scribner/Century and the publications he wrote and printed for his various professional organizations gave DeVinne the exposure he needed to obtain additional jobs and contracts. As Tichenor notes, “By the middle of the 1880s DeVinne was clearly sought out by publishers and private individuals who wanted a printer for deluxe editions.”\textsuperscript{57}

As further explained in chapter five, Drake’s exacting standards for the reproduction of fine illustrations and complicated page layouts required DeVinne to utilize a method of overlays to bring out the tonality in an illustration through the use of hand-layering tissues directly under the paper prior to printing. This system of overlays was not developed by DeVinne; rather it was

\textsuperscript{56} Tichenor, 72.
\textsuperscript{57} Tichenor, 71.
brought into fashion by Englishman Charles Whittingham of the Chiswick Press. In America it was used by Joseph A. Adams of Harper and Brothers in printing the numerous images in the *Harper’s Bible* (1846).\(^{58}\) DeVinne, although not fond of the tedious work, perfected the use of overlays for the printing of Scribner’s/The Century’s magazines.

DeVinne was a sympathetic comrade for Drake in his interest in photo-chemical processes, including process printing. According to Drake, DeVinne was an early proponent of the halftone process and was involved in “bringing it to the highest state of perfection.”\(^{59}\) In addition, DeVinne’s facility was the site for numerous experiments associated with electrotyping and process printing. Like Drake, DeVinne was interested in developing an easier, more accurate and more cost-effective method of reproduction, which led directly to methods of process printing. According to Tichenor, the acceptance of process printing, particularly the halftone, by Scribner/Century and other publishing houses led printers like DeVinne to experiment with better techniques of reinforcing tonal contrasts than the more time-consuming method of hand-layering tissue onto the plates.\(^ {60}\) Early halftones were notoriously muddy and lacked the crispness of line and contrast in tonality associated with wood-engravings. It was necessary to rework the plate by hand with a graver, creating more contrast and picking out important lines. Tissue overlays helped with the tonality; however, the process was tedious and undermined the quick processing time associated with the development of halftones. DeVinne, in association with Edward Bierstadt, created a process to alleviate the necessity for hand-laying tissue onto a plate. This method, which is one of four patented in DeVinne's and his son’s name, creates a single overlay

\(^{58}\) Tichenor, 60.


\(^{60}\) Tichenor, 112.
through a process that utilizes light, light-sensitive gelatin and plumbago in order to create a mold in plaster of paris, from which a flexible gutta-percha is formed. Once backed, the gutta-percha becomes the single overlay for the printing of a halftone.\footnote{As explained in Tichenor, 113}

This experiment was only one of many that took place in the printing facility of DeVinne. Tichenor argues that there is no evidence that DeVinne’s facility had the capability to “produce the many photo-mechanical and photochemical blocks from which he printed.” She suggests that DeVinne sent out illustrations to other companies to produce his plates, such as the Hagopian Photo-Engraving Company, which was responsible for the line-engravings in the 1896 reprint of Moxon’s \textit{Mechanick Exercises}.\footnote{Tichenor, 112} While this may be true for some publications that DeVinne printed, evidence suggests DeVinne’s and Drake’s involvement in process printing was much more complicated. In addition, since DeVinne had an electrotype foundry onsite he had to have the capability of making the plates through the electro-chemical processes necessary to produce them. Furthermore, Drake was already transferring artwork onto the engraver’s block by photoxylography, a process that requires a camera and light sensitive emulsions. Since Drake and DeVinne worked closely together, it can be argued that they already had the capability of producing line blocks and halftones onsite simply because they were already incorporating the separate elements of these processes into their current methods. As already discussed, evidence tells of Drake’s and DeVinne’s working methods and experimentation, pointing to DeVinne as one of the first printers in New York City to embrace process printing and pointing to Drake as leading the breakthrough in photo-chemical processes. Tichenor’s argument is based on a book, Moxon’s \textit{Mechanick Exercises}, that has nothing to do with the production of \textit{St. Nicholas} or
Scribner’s/The Century; therefore, it should not be used as an example of the totality of DeVinne’s working methods. Finally, if DeVinne did on occasion use an outside company for the line blocks that made up a good portion of the illustrations in St. Nicholas, I suggest that he did so because of the sheer volume of processing and printing his firm had to do for Scribner/Century’s magazines. St. Nicholas had an average circulation of 60,000 by 1900, while Scribner’s/The Century had a circulation of 200,000 at its height. It is no wonder that DeVinne might have occasionally needed some help from outside companies in order to produce these magazines on time and in the quality expected from the publisher.

One of the most important contributions DeVinne made to St. Nicholas was his belief in the high standards of good workmanship that, for him, defined the printer’s trade. Like his contemporary William Morris, DeVinne believed that a book was to be printed clearly and boldly, with proper spacing between the lines and letters, and in a typeface that was open, bold and clear to read. However, unlike Morris, DeVinne did not believe that the goal of printing was to create an objet d’art in the form of a finely printed and overly designed book. Instead, he believed that “books were containers and vehicles for the thoughts of their authors, not opportunities for designers to display themselves.”

Leafing through the many volumes of St. Nicholas that make up the thirty-two years associated with this study, one is struck by the bold, clear printing quality of both the type and images. It is very rare to find printing mistakes in St. Nicholas, and when they do occur a prompt note of apology follows a month or two later. It is also rare to find discrepancies in printing between different copies of the same number, or

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64 Tichenor, 256.
between those copies printed as a volume versus individual numbers associated with that year. While this does not sound extraordinary today, it proves that the printing quality associated with DeVinne’s firm was consistent and of a high quality.

DeVinne’s printing aesthetic called for “legibility and clarity” with elements on the page “conservatively arranged.” He preferred type that was open, clear and bold with an emphasis on legibility. This aesthetic was often at odds with the aesthetics promoted by Dodge and Drake. While the printed lettering, the majority of images and the page layouts usually fell in line with DeVinne’s aesthetic, particularly in the 1870s and 1890s, many more of them did not. This was especially true in the 1880s when many of the page layouts were complicated designs that incorporated both hand-written text and images seamlessly linked together into a total work of art. As explored in chapter six, the art and design in *St. Nicholas* paralleled the prevalent artistic expressions popular in the overarching cultural movement of the American Renaissance. This, of course, can be explained by Dodge’s, Drake’s and the artists’ involvement in current artistic trends in the American art scene. DeVinne was a businessman first and foremost, and he applied his superior workmanship to printing Scribner/Century’s periodicals even though the design concept may have contradicted his own. By the 1890s, the trend towards a cleaner, bolder and stronger design in publishing replaced the earlier British Aesthetic-inspired, poetic and more elegant designs associated with the 1880s. This complemented DeVinne’s own printing aesthetic as seen by the rationally designed pages of *St. Nicholas*.

Finally, this change in design aesthetics within the pages of *St. Nicholas* and the demand for larger print runs for the children’s magazine and for *Scribner’s/The Century* influenced

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65 Tichenor, 256.

66 These concepts will be explored more in the next section.
DeVinne to create a new typeface family for both magazines that was bolder, blacker and easier
to read than the old typeface. Part of the reason for the development of this new type family,
called Century, was the increased use of high speed presses to print the majority of the
magazines. Century Expanded was used specifically for this purpose since it contained the
proper amount of white space around each letter that DeVinne thought necessary for legibility.67

In November 1895, the typeface was introduced to the readers of *The Century Magazine*. By
November 1899, *St. Nicholas* announced that:

> Beginning with the present number, the first issue of the seventeenth volume, *St.
> Nicholas* is to be enlarged by the addition of eight (and often more) pages in each
> number, and improved by the use of a new and clearer-faced font of type.68

Throughout his career, DeVinne’s main objective was to print books and magazines that were
legible and clear, and that were printed with masterful skill according to precise specifications.

DeVinne’s and Drake’s attention to detail and their unyielding quest for perfection made
them an indispensable part of the *St. Nicholas* team. Their leadership in professional
organizations and the greater art world outside of Scribner/The Century keep them abreast of
new aesthetic styles and artistic theories, which they, in turn, including in the pages of *St.
Nicholas*.

67 Tichenor, 107.
68 Inside cover page, *St. Nicholas Magazine* 27, no. 1 (November 1899)
Chapter 5: Materials and Methods: Printing St. Nicholas

The study of any material object is limited to what is available to the researcher. In the case of St. Nicholas, complete sets of the bound volumes are more readily available than the individual issues that are usually only found in antique shops or as part of archives, and that are never in complete sets. It goes without saying that binding the individual numbers between two, stiff boards helps to protect and preserve the very brittle wood pulp paper or coated papers that make up a magazine like St. Nicholas. In line with traditional publishing practice, the binding of individual numbers into a complete volume was done by many families who subscribed to the magazine or who purchased individual numbers at the bookseller. Binding was a financially sound decision for families whose multiple children could range in age over a ten to fifteen year period. As seen in many of the letters found in the “Letterbox” section of the magazine, bound volumes graced many special bookcases and were read over and over by each child — and adult — in the household. Some letters from the late 1880s and 1890s tell of young readers of St. Nicholas who were privileged to inherit their parents’ bound volumes, and whose parents continued their subscription throughout their teenage years and adulthood with the intention of weening their own children on the pages of “good ol’ St. Nick.”

Those wishing to have bound volumes of St. Nicholas had three options. Readers could take their copies to their own printer and binder. They could either have their copies bound within boards of their own choosing or they could send the publishers $.50 for the iconic red and gold embossed, morning-glory covers. When the publishers increased the number of pages of the magazine in 1880 with volume 7, a single year was split into two volumes and the cost of the

boards increased to $1.50, but was then reduced to $1.00 with volume 14, postage paid. These covers would be sent to the subscriber upon request at the end of the year with the last number in October. Readers would then take the year’s worth of *St. Nicholas* and the publisher’s boards to their printer or binder for binding.

Readers could also send the publisher their personal copies to be bound by DeVinne. According to a letter from January 1875 written by the editors to an inquiry regarding binding, subscribers could send their monthly copies to the publisher along with $1.00 to pay for binding. Return postage of $.32 was required if the bound copy was to be sent by mail.\(^70\) By the end of 1886, volume 13, the publishers offered to bind the two half-yearly parts for .$75 a part, or $1.50 for the complete volume. Readers were instructed by the publishers that:

> In sending the numbers to us, they should be distinctly marked with owner’s name, and 54 cents (27 cents a part) should be included in remittance, to cover postage on the volume if it is to be returned by mail … We bind with our own covers only, and in two parts. Volumes previous to VII bound in one part for 75 cents.\(^71\)

Of course, the iconic red and gold covers would be used, and often a bonus frontispiece would be included before the table of contents as an incentive to use the publisher to bind the year’s volume.

Finally, a family could obtain bound volumes without actually subscribing to the magazine or buying the individual numbers. Scribner and, later, Century, offered a beautifully bound volume that was for sale through subscription or in booksellers in December as part of their Christmas promotion. The advantage of buying already bound volumes was that the pages did not go through the torturous act of being handled by young readers and were, therefore

\(^{70}\) “Letterbox,” *St. Nicholas Magazine* 2, no. 3 (January 1875): 196.

\(^{71}\) *St. Nicholas Magazine* 14, no. 1 (November 1886): cover.
pristine. The bound volumes often had a bonus frontispiece that was not included in the original numbers. Many children, such as young Caroline S. S., only “took” *St. Nicholas* at the end of the year, and usually as a Christmas gift from parents or other doting relatives.\(^\text{72}\)

All the individual numbers bound in a volume by the publisher were without their original covers and advertisements, while those bound at local printers’ shops could contain the end material if requested by the customer. The drawback to studying only the bound volumes, particularly those owned by the New York Public Library where this research was conducted, is that the scholar is not getting a complete picture of how each individual number aesthetically unfolded each month. The original cover and the end materials are missing, both of which add to the understanding of how this object existed within the cultural landscape of which it was part. What kinds of objects were advertised? Who did the illustrations for the ads? How did these images function as part of what I am calling a “portable art museum?” While not the focus of this dissertation, it is intriguing to speculate on the associations created between the consumption of proper culture in the form of art and literature, and the consumption of popular culture in the form of everyday, material goods. In addition, as readers of a bound volume, we are at the mercy of the integrity of the binder. While I was able to obtain the “meat” of each volume, there were instances when the volume was bound incorrectly with pages misplaced or missing, the frontispiece missing or used for the frontispiece for the table of contents, or whole sections missing.

The volumes available at the New York Public Library are predominately bound with generic, library boards, with a handful of volumes touting the red and gold morning-glory

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covers. Each volume is stamped with the original libraries’ mark and many are punched with the libraries’ location and name on the pages. The volumes are in various states of condition ranging from relatively good condition with sound stitching, to loose boards and missing pages, to absolutely unreadable. Each volume has obviously gone through many hands, which illustrates another challenge of studying material objects that were meant to be used and not admired from a distance like paintings or sculptures. The condition of each volume determined the amount of time spent with each and its availability. When condition was an issue, on-line scans provided by the University of Florida and the HathiTrust Digital Library proved invaluable. The most fascinating aspect of studying these material objects that were handled by generations of children are the marks that they, themselves, left on the volumes. The readers’ interactions with the object are seen through missing images that were special enough to be cut out of the volume to be kept by the reader, through the childlike scrawl in the form of names, poems, and notes, and through the coloring of the once monotone images with colored pencils, crayons, or watercolors. These instances of the reader’s autonomy attest to the interaction between the audience and the printed page, particularly the printed image, which is essential to our understanding of the effectiveness of the art and aesthetic education program, as we shall see.

The inaugural number of *St. Nicholas* set the stylistic benchmark for the rest of the 1870s. Originally, the magazine was printed in octavo, resulting in a page that was five inches wide and eight inches high. Until volume seven, starting in November 1879, each issue was 50-70 pages, not including the advertisements, table of contents, covers, and end materials. In the November 1879 issue, the editors announced that the magazine was to have sixteen more pages every month:
St. Nicholas begins its seventh volume with this number, and, besides the promised extra pages, wider magazine and heavier paper, the publishers have given an additional frontispiece for the volume, — and a red-line title page, as an earnest that they mean to do always a little better for the magazine than they make promise.\textsuperscript{73}

No doubt this was to facilitate the growing number of advertisements and the roll of honor for the popular department, \textit{Bird Defenders}. These features often took up a tremendous amount of space and sometimes cut into the space allotted to \textit{Jack-in-the-Pulpit} and \textit{The Letterbox}.

As a result of this increase in page number and size of the magazine, the publishers felt that the year could no longer be bound in one volume, and instead offered to bind the year into two parts.\textsuperscript{74}

\textit{St. Nicholas} was enlarged again with the November 1899 number, volume 26. Its front cover proclaimed that the magazine was to have new type and more pages. The inside cover confirmed this:

\begin{quote}
St. Nicholas is to be enlarged by the addition of eight (and often more) pages in each number, and improved by the use of a new and clearer-faced font of type.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Typeface}

Like its parent magazine, \textit{Scribner’s Monthly}, the typeface in \textit{St. Nicholas} remained unchanged for over two decades. Theodore Low DeVinne originally used a “modified old-style type” that was relatively small and difficult to read for both magazines.\textsuperscript{76} The typeface in the first twenty-six volumes was delicate and light, with very little white space between the letters and a small, but equidistant space between each word. During this time the typeface was only

\textsuperscript{74} “Letterbox,” \textit{St. Nicholas Magazine} 7, no. 2 (October 1880): 996.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{St. Nicholas} 17, no. 1 (November 1899)
\textsuperscript{76} Irene Tichenor, \textit{No Art Without Craft: The Life of Theodore Low De Vinne, Printer} (Jaffrey, N.H.: David R. Godine, Publisher, 2005), 106.
increased in point size for certain departments like the “Letterbox” to facilitate easy and comfortable reading. In 1895, *St. Nicholas’s* parent magazine, *The Century Magazine*, switched to a clearer and more readable typeface family called “Century” that was designed by DeVinne exclusively for The Century Company and its products.\(^77\) In 1899, *St. Nicholas* followed suit. The new typeface family, particularly that of Century Roman and Century Expanded, was bolder and darker, with more white space between the letters and a clear, equidistant space between the each word. The letters expanded upwards and seem to extend slightly in width. The Century family is a clear and easy to read typeface that is much more graphic than the earlier styles. Tichenor suggests that DeVinne’s changes to the typeface used in both *The Century* and *St. Nicholas* was prompted by an aesthetic demand for a clearer, bolder, and more legible type, as well as by changes in the strength of the printed impressions caused by high speed rotary printers.\(^78\)

Other examples of “typeface” in *St. Nicholas* were not technically mechanical type at all, but rather engrossed and illustrated pages done by artists like Reginald Birch, Katharine Pyle, and Jessica McDermott. Engrossing is a practice of fancy penmanship and flourishes, as seen in the full-page composition by Reginald Birch for Laura E. Richard’s “Albazan,” May 1885 (figure 12). Artists composed entire pages or a series of pages by completely integrating the images with hand-written script that they would design. By designing both text and image as a unified composition, the artist was able to create a complete work of art where the word and image worked together in harmony. The illustrations depended on the artist’s interpretation of the written word that was composed by the author. The art department and Dodge were careful

\(^77\) Tichenor, 106-107.
\(^78\) Tichenor, 107.
to select artists whose penmanship and style of illustration suited the prose or verse so that a seamless page would be created. However, some artists like H. McVikars wrote the verse that he illustrated and engrossed, as seen in “The Frog’s Teaparty,” June 1877 (figure 13). The illustrations, the hand-written words, the page composition, and the verse or prose are all the result of a single creative thought; and therefore, these full-page layouts best represent the autonomous output of the artist.

Engrossing was easily accomplished because of the use of process-printing techniques, particularly those in the line block family. If DeVinne was printing the engrossed pages of *St. Nicholas* directly from the woodblock, the images and words would print in reverse. The artist who wrote the letters in the design would have to do so backwards in order for the page to be printed correctly. However, by utilizing a combination of photography and electotyping, DeVinne was able to transfer a photographic negative of the image directly onto a zinc plate through the use of light-sensitive gelatin and acid, creating a positive of the original artwork when printed. This process, which will be explained in detail below, eliminated the necessity of writing backwards in the original artwork and eventually replaced wood-engravings in commercial printing.79

**Paper**

The types of paper used in *St. Nicholas* was determined by cost, availability, type of press, complexity of the illustration, and the methods of creating and printing the plate. For the entirety of the 1870s, most of the 1890s, and into the next century, a slightly smooth, matte, wood-pulp paper was used for the bulk of the magazine. While not the cheapest or lowest

quality of the wood-pulp papers, the paper used in *St. Nicholas* was inexpensive, readily available, and could tolerate the high-speed, steam powered planar and rotary presses, both of which were used to print *St. Nicholas* throughout the nineteenth-century. DeVinne was also able to print on this paper while it was dry, thereby cutting down time and cost. The drawback of wood-pulp paper was that it could not successfully be used to print very complex and finely detailed wood-engravings, line blocks, or halftones, all of which needed a smoother, thicker paper to pick up the details of tone and line. These very detailed images, like that of the illustrations that accompanied Elsie G’s essay “Grandmother” (figure 14), were usually utilized as the frontispiece to each issue, or were full-page illustrations within the text. These images were printed separately on coated papers by the slower, planar press and were tilted in by workers in the binding department.\(^{80}\) The other, albeit modern, drawback to the wood-pulp paper is its eventual fragility. Wood-pulp based papers are highly acidic and prone to deterioration, splintering and breaking over time and usage.

As early as 1874 or early 1875, DeVinne actively experimented with a thicker and smoother paper to print the increasingly detailed wood-engravings done by those engravers who subscribed to the New School of wood-engraving.\(^{81}\) As discussed in chapter three, engravers like Timothy Cole sought to erase their own hand in their quest to depict the nuances of tone and line found in the artists’ original works. The multitude of expressive lines and the increased use of engraved stippling methods required smoother, thicker paper for accurate printing. Moreover, many of the delicately designed line blocks being used by DeVinne required this kind of paper as well, especially those used to produce the illustrated and engrossed design that spanned many

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\(^{80}\) Tichenor, 83-84.
\(^{81}\) Tichenor, 114.
pages. According to Bamber Gascoigne, “coated papers” were in use since the 1830s and were increasingly used in illustrated books from the mid-nineteenth-century.\textsuperscript{82} This type of paper was coated in china clay and was polished smooth, creating a surface that was able to translate the finest details of engravings and process printing. It was relatively expensive and was used primarily in fine illustrated books for frontispieces and full page illustrations that were tilted in. In the 1870s DeVinne used coated paper for the frontispiece of each issue. Drake was given partial credit, along with S. D. Warren paper manufactures in Boston, for the invention of calendared paper by William Dana Orcutt.\textsuperscript{83} However, Drake himself gives the credit to DeVinne who, he said, needed a smooth paper for the kind of detailed printing in which he was engaged and which was associated with the advances in reproduction technology that Drake helped develop.\textsuperscript{84} Furthermore, as argued by Tichenor, the paper manufacturer himself, that of Charles M. Gage, “made it clear that he had developed paper coated on both sides in Massachusetts in late 1874 or early 1875 at the specific request of DeVinne who needed it for a catalogue with colored wood-engravings.”\textsuperscript{85} From these accounts it becomes obvious that the invention of calendared paper is a result of DeVinne’s requirement for a specific type of smooth paper in order to clearly print complicated and intricate imagery.

For the entire decade of the 1880s, DeVinne used calendared paper for every page of \textit{St. Nicholas} and not for just the frontispieces and full-paged illustrations. The effect was extraordinary. By using calendared paper for the entire issue, DeVinne accomplished three

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{82} Gascoigne, 70 c, d
\item\textsuperscript{83} William Dana Orcutt, \textit{The Kingdom of Books} (Boston: Little, Brown, 1927), 170.
\item\textsuperscript{84} Alexander W. Drake, letter to the editor, \textit{New York Times} (19 February 1914): 8.
\item\textsuperscript{85} Tichenor, 114; see original source, Charles M. Gage, “The Origin of Coated or Enameled Book Paper,” \textit{Paper Trade Journal} 48 (3 July 1919): 28, 30.
\end{itemize}
important things. Firstly, he was able to print complicated page layouts, layouts that transversed over multiple pages, and finely wrought illustrations easily and clearly. Secondly, calendared paper helped him to achieve the tonal and linear nuances associated with process printing, especially in the printing of line blocks and halftones. Finally, and most importantly, utilizing calendared paper for the entire issue affected the feel of the magazine as a whole entity.

Paging through the volumes associated with the 1870s, one is immediately struck by the abrupt divisions between each issue of a particular volume. These divisions are accomplished by the tilting in of a frontispiece that was printed on smooth coated paper, as compared to the rest of the issue that was printed on rough, matte paper. However, in utilizing calendared paper for the entirety of the issue, DeVinne created a continuous reading experience that is not interrupted by the changes in paper quality, at least in the bound volume. Calendared papers make no division between the illustrations — finely wrought or not — and the printed word, allowing the eye to easily and smoothly move throughout the volume. Of course, advertisements would have been printed on the cheaper, more fragile wood-pulp; but they would have been placed at the beginning or end of each issue. Acting in much the same way as the covers of an issue, the end material would not have interrupted the flow within the magazine itself. The utilization of calendared papers for the entire magazine also creates the feeling that the issues and, later, the volumes are whole objects unto themselves. In 1889 the continuous flow of the magazine and its state of autonomous objectivity was broken once again. Perhaps because of the high cost of calendared paper, or perhaps because DeVinne was printing much of St. Nicholas on high-speed rotary printers, the printer switched back to a combination of wood-pulp and calendared papers. Then in December 1890 to October 1893, DeVinne once again printed the entire magazine on
calendared papers, only switching again to a mix of papers in November 1893. For the rest of the decade, calendared paper was reserved for halftones, artistic page layouts, frontispieces, and extremely finished illustrations that were reproduced via wood-blocks or line blocks. These pages would be tilted in before the spine of the magazine was glued. The bulk of the magazine, including many pages that contained illustrations, was printed on matte, wood-pulp paper. The combination of calendared paper and wood-pulp paper broke the organic, aesthetic flow that was achieved in the 1880s. The mix of two kinds of paper throughout the magazine is both visually and tacitly jarring. As compared to the 1870s and 1890s, DeVinne’s exclusive use of calendared paper during the 1880s made the magazine aesthetically more cohesive as a “total work of art.”

**The Printing Process of St. Nicholas**

The last quarter of the nineteenth-century was a time of great experimentation in the printing field, and DeVinne was at the forefront. According to Tichenor, DeVinne was continuously striving to improve printing methods so to get the best quality print for the least amount of money in the shortest amount of time. As the sole printer for *Scribner's/Century* and *St. Nicholas*, DeVinne worked ceaselessly to perfect his printing techniques and employed cutting edge machinery to print the high circulation magazines. Specifically, he contracted the Hoe Company to modify its rotary web press to print only text pages, thereby speeding up the printing process. The modified rotary web press was used only to print the text and advertisement pages of *The Century*, while its illustrations and the entirety of *St Nicholas* was printed on slower stop-cylinder presses. By 1890, the Hoe Company created a new rotary web...
press that could print both text and illustrations for DeVinne, thus speeding up the printing of *St. Nicholas*.  

According to Tichenor, the illustrations in *St. Nicholas* were predominately line blocks. This umbrella term, which is extremely misleading, does not take into consideration the variety of techniques DeVinne, the wood-engravers, and the artists employed to achieve a range of tone and clarity in the printed illustrations. Finally, Tichenor’s generalizing statement ignores that halftones, which are not considered line blocks, made up at least a third of all the images in *St. Nicholas* from the late-1880s onwards.

**Wood-engravings**

At the conception of *St. Nicholas* in 1873, wood-engraving was the primary method of printing images in the illustrated press. The term “engraving” is a misnomer because this technique is a relief method like that of wood-block printing, and not an intaglio method like that of metal engraving. Instead of using the plank side of the boxwood, as would be done in a wood-block, the engraver worked across the end grain. Cutting across the end grain with a graver allowed the wood-engraver to create thinner and clearer lines than would be possible with a knife on the plank side. First the image was transferred onto the block and then the wood-engraver removed the white areas with the graver, leaving the raised areas to be inked and printed. This technique is the basis of all wood-engraving and was done by skilled craftsmen who underwent extensive apprenticeships. In the eighteenth-century, Bewick introduced a technique

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87 Tichenor, 83-84. Note: at their height, the circulation of *The Century Magazine* and *St. Nicholas* reached over half a million a month.  
88 Tichenor, 62.  
method called white-line wood-engraving, whereby the lines in the image are carved out instead of interpreted as black ink lines. This method utilized the white of the paper to define the majority of the forms, and the black ink to provide the background from which the forms emerged. Introduced in the mid-nineteenth century, the interpretive method, or black-line wood-engraving, was used to print the expressive pen drawings of artists. Instead of carving the lines and leaving them white, the wood-engraver would delicately carve around the lines, producing a replica of the line drawing when printed. This method sought to maintain the integrity of the artists’ lines, and yielded an image that appeared to be printed in black upon the white ground. Both methods produced certain working practices that would become standard as they were passed down through the apprenticeship system.

The original drawing would either be done on the block itself, or the paper carrying the image would be placed on top of the block and carved through by the engraver. Either way, the original image was destroyed by the engraving process, leaving the engraver without a reference as he worked. Without a reference to the original artwork, the engraver interpreted the artist’s lines and often reworked the original design, much to the chagrin of the artist. For many artists, the wood-engraver was a meddling, but necessary, middleman between their original work and the reading public.

The introduction of photography to the publishing industry in the 1860s revolutionized the way the original artwork was transferred to the block, and subsequently, revolutionized the working methods of the engraver and freed those of the illustrator. The block was covered with a light sensitive gelatin and then was exposed to a photograph projected onto its surface, transferring the image onto the block for the engraver to cut. The benefit of this process was that
the original artwork was preserved and could serve as a model for the engraver. It also freed the artist from the constraints of the block and of the limited style of line drawing. In the original method, the size of the printed image was limited by the size of the end of the boxwood. In turn, the size of the artists’ drawings were limited. Photography enabled engravers to size an original artwork to fit that of the boxwood block, and therefore, allowed artists to work on larger papers. Additionally, the photo transfer process enabled artists to break free from strictly using pen and ink to produce line drawings, and gave them the freedom to explore other mediums. It is important to note that this did not mean that artists had unabashed freedom to create large-sized, tonal images. After all, the resulting image would still be dependent on the engravers’ lines, crosshatching, and stippling. It did, however, pave the way for the autonomy of the artist and the establishment of the artist’s predominance over the engraver, whose status diminished.

The original work of art could take the form of a line drawing, a tonal wash, or a photograph, and would be transferred as such. Once the illustration was transferred onto the block it was up to the engraver to interpret the various transitions from light to dark, and the various textures created by washes. As discussed in the last chapter, engravers like Timothy Cole developed a wide range of personal engraving techniques that could preserve the stylistic integrity of the artist. As the leader of the younger generation of wood-engravers, Cole promoted the idea that the hand of the engraver was subservient to that of the artist. He encouraged engravers to break free from the conventional methods of the so-called Old School, and supported the virtuosity of technique associated with the so-called New School. In the hands of

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90 Note: To print a large drawing would required multiple blocks fastened together. The drawing would be transferred by hand or would be drawn directly on the block. The blocks would be unfastened, given to separate engravers, refastened when completed, and smoothly finished by a master engraver.
a practitioner of New School methods, wood-engraving became a dazzling display of minute lines, dots, lozenges, and dashes that mimic the tones and textures of the original. Wood-engravings were used in *St. Nicholas* throughout the nineteenth-century and into the twentieth-century despite the fact that process printing took over much of the magazine’s illustrations.

From the early 1800s the wood-engraved blocks were stereotyped because wood was too soft for extensive commercial printing. Therefore, it was necessary for the printer to create a replica of the woodblock in metal that was then adhered to a block of wood so that it could be printed with the type. Replicas of composed type and full page layouts were also be created utilizing this method. Eventually, the process of stereotyping was replaced by that of electrotyping for this purpose.\(^1\) Electrotyping required a steady volt of electricity and was only commercially possible after 1872 with the availability of steam-powered generators. Both stereotypes and electrotypes were utilized to create wear-resistant plates that could handle long print runs associated with magazine and book publishing, and were invaluable in freeing type for other projects. Most importantly, these methods produced exact replicas of the original in metal, which then could be stored for future reprints.\(^2\) Tichenor argues that while DeVinne had his own facilities to create electrotypes, including a forge in the basement of his printing building, he most likely utilized an outside vendor for this purpose.\(^3\) I would argue that DeVinne probably did both: created electrotypes in house and used an outside company that specialized in electrotyping, perhaps for more complex work. After all, DeVinne did have a foreman for the electrotyping department, an in-house forge, and steam-powered electrical generators. It would

\(^1\) Gascoigne, 33 a-e.  
\(^2\) Tichenor, 215.  
\(^3\) Tichenor, pp
be economical for him to electrotype the composed frames of typeface and perhaps some of the
simpler wood-engravings. It would also make sense for him to keep his type constantly available
and in house.

Signatures on the images tell us who the artist and the engraver were. During the 1870s
the predominate signature found on an illustration in St. Nicholas was that of the engraver, who
was considered more important than the artist because it was through his hand that the
illustration was brought to the audience. Often times the engraver’s signature would be the only
one on the illustration. Furthermore, from November 1873 to October 1876 (volumes 1 through
4), the artists’ names do not appear anywhere within the magazine, unless an editorial discussed a
particular illustration or gave credit to an international artist who contributed to St. Nicholas, like
Gustave Doré whose illustration “To Oblige a Friend” (figure 15) appeared in December 1874.94
During these years, the only way it was possible to identify the artists was if they signed their
illustrations and those signatures were transferred by the wood-engraver. Sometimes all we have
are initials or an artist’s mark. Starting in volume four, the artists’ names appeared in the table of
contents. If the pieces were signed and listed in the table of contents it is easy to trace back
through the previous volumes to compare initials and signatures to identify many of the artists.
This provides us with a semi-complete record of the artists who contributed to St. Nicholas. The
engravers, however, were not listed in the table of contents and were often identified only by
initials. Some, like R. A. Muller, J. P. Davis, F. Juengling, Pannemaker, C. Cullen, D. Nicholas,
and Winham-Arnold, appear regularly throughout the 1870s and 1880s.

For the most part, the appearance of an engraver’s name on an illustration indicates that the image was a wood-engraving that was then printed by a stereotyped or electrotyped plate. With the introduction of photochemical process printing techniques, the signatures of the engravers gradually disappeared. These processes rendered the engraver’s trade obsolete because they did not require skilled craftsman. Engravers were employed only to clean up the plate, to add highlights, or to pick out details that were lost in the process. For the most part, the names of these engravers are unknown. However, in *St. Nicholas* the name of Kuntz, an engraver, appears time and again in line block or halftone prints (figure 16 a and 16 b). Upon closer inspection, it is obvious that these images contain the pure white lines created by a graver, indicating that they were, indeed, touched up by the engraver. Perhaps by signing his name the engraver made a final attempt to maintain his important status in the publishing world.

**Types of Wood-Engraving**

Before the extensive use of photochemical processes, wood-engraving was used to reproduce the most detailed and complicated illustrations and simple line drawings. For the most part, the illustrations in *St. Nicholas* were specifically commissioned for the magazine and for the specific feature or story that they accompanied. However, there is evidence that Drake and DeVinne used stock imagery as “filler,” especially at the end of a feature to create a break between stories. The correspondence records in the Archives of Charles Scribner and Sons, show that stock imagery was indeed purchased for such a purpose.95

The wood-engravings in *St. Nicholas* fall into three levels of draughtsmanship: that of finely wrought, full-page wood-engravings done in either the more traditional Old School

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95 Letter to Charles Scribner, dated May 1; Archives of Charles Scribner and Sons, Box 10, Folder 1; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
method or the interpretive New School method; that of a smaller, yet still technologically fine, wood-engraving; and that of a basic linear, not so technologically fine, wood-engraving. The finer, more advanced wood-engravings would have taken a long time to produce, would have been done by a skilled master craftsman like Timothy Cole or Juengling, and would have been expensive to produce. Despite these factors, especially that of the high cost, the publishers furnished Dodge with the money to include a large number of finely-wrought wood-engravings in each issue, as seen in the illustration “Too Much for Comfort,” illustrator unknown, for James Richardson’s “Seven Miles Up in the Air,” June 1876, (figure 17) and the frontispiece to March 1886 of “Madame Le Brun’s Portrait of Herself,” (figure 18). Furthermore, reproductions of fine art done by a master wood-engraver like Timothy Cole, were predominately featured throughout the editorship of Dodge, only being replaced by halftone reproductions in the 1890s. These reproductions will be discussed more fully in the next chapter; however, it is instructive to include a few samples here to demonstrate how advanced and inventive wood-engravers could be when creating a facsimile of a master painting, as seen in the frontispiece to the December 1884 issue of Velázquez’s “The Infanta Marguerita Maria — a Spanish Princess of Two Hundred Years Ago,” and the frontispiece to December 1881 of Zamacois’s “The King’s Favorite,” both engraved by Timothy Cole (figures 19 and 20). The New School’s virtuosity is seen in the array of lines, dots, lozenges, and other engraving markings used to faithfully render the forms and tonality of a photograph (figure 21). The wood-engravers used any technique necessary to achieve a believable facsimile of paintings and photos, including the use of closely placed lines and stippling.
As discussed in the previous chapter, an important factor that led to the innovative methodology of the New School of wood-engravers was the use of photography to transfer the artists’ drawing or the photograph onto the wood-block. Not only did this technique preserve the original artwork for the engraver’s reference, it also directly transferred the tonality of the original. This forced the wood-engraver to invent new methods to produce tone in a reproductive discipline that depended solely on line. The inclusion of examples of both styles — that of traditional Old School wood-engravings and that of the innovative, New School of wood-engravings — produced an array of visually dazzling and complex images that set *St. Nicholas* apart from other children’s magazines.

*St. Nicholas* also included many simple line drawings that were reproduced via wood-engravings. Some of these were intentionally simplified, and often quite humorous like that of Frank Beard’s “The Girl Who Wouldn’t Eat Crusts,” January 1874 (figure 22). Many of these simplified, linear wood-engravings reflect the style of the artist and a preference for the expressive quality of the line, as seen in Addie Ledyard’s illustration for “The Queen of the May” by Mary Mapes Dodge (figure 23). However, there are plenty of instances where these simplified wood-engravings were used because they were cheap, easy, and quick to produce. It is precisely these kinds of images that would eventually be reproduced with line block, especially the process of etching with photography.

**Line Blocks and Halftones: The Process Print in *St. Nicholas***

By definition, a line block is “any relief block on which the image has been achieved other than manually but without the use of a halftone screen.”\(^{96}\) The two main techniques in the

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\(^{96}\) Gascoigne, 33.
line block family used in *St. Nicholas* were electrotypes done with photography and etchings done with photography. Both required photographic negatives and light-sensitive gelatin applied to either a flat surface or a metal plate. These techniques used photography to transfer the image, thereby creating lines that were distinct from those created by the wood-engraving process. Since the line block illustrations were not translated by the tools of a wood-engraver, they did not have the typical white spaces that were engraved away, creating a line edge that was clearly defined. Instead, the image is transferred by a photographic negative, creating a facsimile of the artist’s lines; therefore, they are drawn and not engraved. As already noted, the photochemical processes directly transferred the artist’s intention onto the printing surface without the necessity of a middleman. This process heralded complete autonomy for the artist, and made the vocation of the engraver obsolete. Photochemical processes freed artists from the constraints of pure line and allowed them to fully express themselves. As a result of the shift towards the artists and the integrity of the artists’ intention away from the sole control of the engraver, the commercial use of photochemical processes created an environment for illustration to thrive in America. Images were quickly transferred to the printing block, allowing DeVine to include more images in *St. Nicholas*, reserving the traditional wood-engravings for finely worked images. As the engravers’ signatures disappeared, those of the artists gained prominence.

Both processes, that of electrotyping with photography and that of etching with photography, depended on the photographic negative to transfer the original image to a plate covered with light-sensitive gelatin. For photosensitive gelatins, fish skins and tails were often

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97 According to the Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York’s webpage, “Gelatin is a colorless, transparent, brittle protein extracted from the skin, bones, and connective tissue of animals,” In the section, “Photography and the Black Arts” http://www.metropostcard.com/techniques3.html. Accessed 5/2/2014
used. After an extensive curing process, the gelatin is mixed with potassium dichromate to make it photosensitive. The gelatin is then applied to a flat surface and a photographic negative is placed on top. The plate is then exposed to light. The gelatin hardens under the areas of the negative that are transparent, while the unexposed areas remained gelatinous and easy to wash away with warm water. The hardened gelatin thus creates a low relief of the image on the printing substrate. This was the first step in two separate line block techniques, that of electrotyping with photography with warm rinse, and that of etching with photography with warm rinse. If the substrate was not metal, double electrotyping was used to create a facsimile of the image. The low relief was coated with graphite to make it electrically conductive. It was then suspended in a water bath with a copper plate opposite it. Both were connected to wires that were then connected to a steam powered generator. A constant electric charge was kept over a period of weeks, resulting in the deposit of copper on the printing substrate. Once thick enough, the copper was then separated from its matrix. The resulting printing surface was in reverse, so, if a direct facsimile was required, the process had to be repeated.

If the original process was done utilizing a zinc plate as the printing substrate, the low relief lines caused by the hardening of the exposed gelatin were then coated to make them acid resistant. The plate was then dipped into an acid bath. The acid “bit” the exposed metal, leaving acid resistant lines that were originally formed by the unexposed gelatin. The acid acted in much the same way the wood-engraver’s tool: both removed the space around the lines, leaving the

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98 Gascoigne, 73a.
99 Gascoigne, 33c-e
100 Gascoigne, 33c-e.
lines in relief to be printed. Although this technique resulted in the reverse of the original image, it was extensively used by DeVinne because of its ease and rapidity.

The third type of line block was developed after 1870 and took the place of the above mentioned electrotyping process. As with the other two processes already described, the process begins with coating a plate with light-sensitive gelatin. A photographic negative is placed on top of the plate and exposed, creating the same reaction as described. However, instead of rinsing the plate with warm water and thereby rinsing the unexposed gelatin off the plate, the plate is soaked in cold water. The exposed gelatin that has already hardened from the exposure process has no reaction to the cold water. The unexposed gelatin, however, swells in cold water, thereby surrounding the hardened, exposed lines. This created a reverse cast of the relief block that could easily be made into a facsimile with only one electrotyping process.101

Examples of Line Block

It is extremely difficult to determine which process method was used with absolute certainty. A loupe or microscope are invaluable aides in the identification process. Magnifying the types of dots or lines to determine their shape, edges, thickness, space between each other can help in identifying the photochemical process used to transfer and then to print the image. This is because each process has its unique, individual marking type. However, there are a variety of methods that can easily trick the most seasoned and savvy print historian.

Furthermore, Drake and DeVinne actively experimented with all methods available to them at the time, especially those that had commercial potential like rotogravure. They experimented with photography, chemicals, and other basic methods, to create a truthful and exact facsimile of

101 Gascoigne, 33 e.
the original artwork or photograph. While some of these experiments were further developed into working practices like the halftone, others were never brought to commercial production. Some experiments were probably lost to the annals of time, tucked deep in unexplored production notebooks located in various archives or family documents. Other experiments most likely died with the men who worked with Drake and DeVinne. Experiments, particularly those associated with printing tones and facsimiles, were trade secrets, and were vigilantly safeguarded from prying eyes. I speculate that many of these experiments that found their way into *St. Nicholas* were not written down and therefore lost. Many of these experiments resulted in what can only be called hybrid techniques that combined various processes with the aim of reproducing believable tones or facsimiles.

With this caveat in place, it is safe to say that a line block will usually not contain the name or initials of the engraver. Additionally, the reproduced lines will appear to be drawn, as compared to a wood-engraving that will bear the hard-edged, clean engraving marks. As already mentioned, there will be instances in *St. Nicholas* where an engraver signed a processed block (figure 16). Upon closer observation, pure white lines with clean edges cut across the regular dots of a halftone or are picked out in a line block. Obviously, the plate had been altered by an engraver who thought it appropriate to take credit for the work that he did.

It is also relatively safe to speculate that the simpler, linear drawings were probably reproduced utilizing a quick etching process, as seen in E. B. Bensell’s “Milmy-Melmy,” May 1884 (figure 24). However, when a facsimile of a drawing was required, or for a full-page layout that contained engrossing, it was probable that electrotyping with photography using a cold rinse was used because it quickly and easily created an image that would print correctly in a single
electrotype process (figure 25). It can be speculated that both, as well as a variety of hybrid methods, were in constant use by DeVinne and Drake.

**The Great Dot Dilemma: the Making of Tone**

The quest for tonality and facsimile was all-consuming for much of the publishing industry. Specifically, many methods were used to directly and accurately reproduce photographs, including those of original art work. However, not all of these experiments were commercially viable because they were too expensive or took too much time. Some experiments resulted in hybrid methods that produced images that had the characteristic of a variety of processes. Since much of this information was well guarded and not recorded, it has been lost to the modern researcher, although it might be uncovered at some future date.

Images like that of “Sir William Napier Writing His Letter of Excuse to His Friends” by Jessie McDermott for Celia Thaxter’s “Sir William Napier and Little Joan,” January 1882 (figure 26), were early attempts to create a direct facsimile of a tonal drawing using an unknown method. The result was a rather feathery, soft, and muddy image. Under magnification the ink appears to be deposited in the same patterning as that of a calotype or photogravure. While this technique was relatively successful in printing the tonality of a photo, it must not have been commercially successful because this method does not reappear again in *St. Nicholas*. If it was a photogravure, the process was expensive and would have to wait until after the 1890s for the development of the rotogravure process.¹⁰² In researching the known methods used to print both magazines and postcards during the later part of the nineteenth-century, and by comparing the resulting ink markings found in the images in *St. Nicholas* with those associated with known

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¹⁰² Gascoigne, 39a-c. The process was originally used for the printing of textiles, but was adopted in the mid 1890s for the printing of paper, particularly for magazines.
methods, it can be surmised that DeVinne was experimenting with different processes, grounds, acids, etc. that were associated with both relief printing and intaglio printing.

The quest to successfully reproduce tonality by a commercially viable method resulted in the manipulation of reproductive methods that were already in use by Drake and DeVinne. Utilizing wood-engravings and line block meant that tones could not be printed in fluid gradations, but rather were limited to the pure black of the ink and the pure white of the paper. The depth of tone was achieved by the closeness of the lines or dots, and the thickness of the lines or dots. In addition, as discussed below, DeVinne used overlays to vary the pressure on the plate which, in turn, varied the amount of ink deposited onto the paper. By the mid-1880s, the discovery and widespread use of the halftone screen would supersede all other methods simply by building upon the technology already in use.

With the widespread use of photoxylographs after the Civil War, wood-engravers broke with traditional techniques and developed innovative methods to transfer a photograph to a wood-block and express tonality in the medium of wood-engraving. It is important to remember that the basis of all wood-engraving is the simple line. However, how this line is laid down, how it is manipulated, and in which direction it goes, can influence the look and feel of the resulting printed image. The practitioners of the New School of wood-engraving masterfully hid their own hands and tricked the eye of the viewer as they tediously translated tone into what appears to be “dots.” The “dot” or variations of the “dot” would become synonymous with tone, especially in the last two decades of the nineteenth-century. Magnification of this type of wood-engraving reveals that the “dots” they created were not really dots at all. Rather, the wood-engraver placed his or her parallel lines incredibly close together and then cut across them
perpendicularly, creating tiny cross-hatching marks in white. When viewed normally these markings appear to be tiny dots or lozenges that are meticulously clumped together to create a stippling effect. This technique can be especially seen in photographic portraits or reproductions of fine art work.

In October 1884 the first fully realized, relief halftone appeared in *St. Nicholas*, “The Misses Longstreth, the Indian Chief, ‘Spotted Tail,’ and Captain Pratt” (figure 27). This image was a reproduction of an original photograph that was transferred to the printing plate through the halftone process. This process is technically not part of the line block family, however it is built upon the etching process already discussed. The halftone process is created in the same basic way as a line block with etching. In both, the photographic negative is laid on top of a zinc plate that was covered with light sensitive gelatin (potassium dichromate) and then exposed.

However, in the halftone process, a screen similar to that of a wire mesh window screen is placed between the photographic transparency and the gelatin covered surface of the plate. Once exposed, the light filters through the transparent sections of the negative, through the openings of the screen, and spread out and under the screen to expose a larger area of the plate. Darker areas of the transparency would result in smaller areas of exposure on the plate. As a result, the shaded areas of the original photograph would print as larger and closer black dots, and the lighter areas would print as smaller and further spaced black dots. This would create the illusion of tone.103 Upon magnification, halftones are relatively easy to identify because the dots are clearly defined and appear mechanical. The usage of halftone in *St. Nicholas* began slowly with only a few per volume and only for reproductions of photographs. By 1887, each issue of

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103 Gascoigne, 74a
*St. Nicholas* contained one or more halftone images that were not only being used to reproduce photographs, but also illustrations and fine art pieces. By the turn of the century nearly half of all the images in an issue of *St. Nicholas* were halftones.

Before the commercial use of halftones and in lieu of wood-engravings, printers like DeVinne developed methods to create tones that would easily work with the process of line block printing, especially that of etching. Two such methods, that of artists’ false halftones and printers’ false halftones, are both found within the pages of *St. Nicholas*, especially in the late 1870s and throughout the 1880s. The problem with both of these methods is that they convincingly and successfully use black dots to create tone, which leads to confusion as to what process is being used to create the printing plate. To an untrained eye and without magnification, images produced with these techniques can easily be labeled as halftones, as I mistakenly did throughout my research. As seen in W. T. Smedley’s “‘How D’Ye Do, ‘Tildy?’ said I” from the story “A Turn at the District School” by A. G. Plympton, May 1880 (figure 28), and Jessie Curtis Shepherd’s “Aunt Endows Hesse with a Wardrobe for the Visit to New York,” from “Uncle and Aunt” by Susan Coolridge, November 1885 (figure 29), the tonal areas of the drawings seem to be convincingly made up of dots that are large and close together, much in the same way as a halftone. Additionally, the highlighted areas are either perfectly white or contain very light and small dots. However, upon magnification, it becomes obvious that the dots are randomly ordered and are not mechanically controlled like those of a halftone.

According to Gascoigne, the illusion of tone could be created with line block processes by simply drawing on specially textured paper with a crayon. This paper was embossed with a grid of dots, upon which an artist would draw his or her design utilizing a soft black crayon.
Lighter pressure would blacken only the tops of the embossed dots, heavier pressure would dent the dots and fill in the spaces between them. The variation in pressure would produce variations in tone based on the space between the dots and the amount of crayon deposited on the embossed dots. The design would then be photographed and processed in the same way as an etched line block. If a consistent light pressure was kept while drawing, the image would appear to be created by a series of black dots as seen in H. Sandham’s “The Loose Boards Rattled as the Wheels Spun Over Them” from the story “The Whirling Club” by LAD, June 1882 (figure 30). This method seems to be used in *St. Nicholas* with quite a bit of regularity.

The other method used was the printer’s false halftone, which depended on the discovery of the halftone method. Quite simply, the printer would have prepared sheets that would be printed in a full range of tone utilizing a halftone screen. These sheets would vary according to dot size and density. A printer would cut out sections of these sheets that would correspond to sections of the original artwork. Each cut out would be placed on its section, photographed, and processed normally as a line block. The resulting printed image looks like a true halftone, however irregularities inevitably tell the truth. This method can be seen in the illustration accompanying Laura E. Richard’s poem “Grandpa Rosebush,” June 1885 (figure 31). The image appears to display successful tonal gradients; however, under magnification, it is obvious that each tonal section does not follow a standard grid pattern produced by one screen. Rather, the grid of each section falls in different directions, and some of the dots are larger than others. It appears that these sections were created by two different screens, in this case two different

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104 Gascoigne, 33H
105 Gascoigne, 33i
prepared sheets laid down at different angles. Like the artists’ false halftones, this method should be considered a true line block.

**Color Printing**

Aside from the red, gold, sepia, burnt umber, and the occasional blue ink of the covers, color illustration in *St. Nicholas* was significantly absent. During the entirety of Dodge’s tenure as editor-in-chief, colored illustrations only appeared four times and all are frontispieces that were tilted in. The first two appeared in the November and December issues of volume 10 in 1882, and both are illustrations done by Reginald Birch. Entitled “Indian Summer” (figure 32) and “Christmas Day in the Morning” (figure 33), both illustrations are colored wood-engravings, or chromoxylographs. These blocks would have been worked on by a team of engravers, each responsible for a specific color, and then overseen by a master engraver who would decide the placement of each color and the intensity of the colors. Each individual color would have a separate block and would be aligned, registered, and printed individually. As seen in the magnification of “Indian Summer” (figure 34), sometimes the blocks would not align correctly and the colors would overlap or bleed out of the black lines, which would be printed last. As seen in the magnification, the intensity corresponds to the amount of crosshatching and the closeness of the engraved lines. When pure color was necessary, like that of the yellow dress, the engraver left the wood untouched so that it printed solid yellow. For a dark color or dark tone as seen in the leaves, the engraver used smaller crosshatching with lines close together. Finally, when only a hint of color was needed as in the background or for the blushed cheeks of the girls, a larger crosshatch was used with lines further apart.

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106 Gascoigne, 23e
Colored images do not appear again in *St. Nicholas* until November 1884 with “Great Grandmother’s Girlhood,” by A. M. Turner (figure 35). Once again the image was the frontispiece to the first issue of the volume; however, instead of a chromoxylograph, this image is a chromolithograph that was tilted in. A line of type under the image states, “Lith. by Buek and Linder, N. Y.,” directly identifying what kind of print it is and who printed it. Merely looking at the image with its soft, chalk-like markings, and layering of colors to create other colors, one can easily identify this as a lithograph. Like chromoxylography, the printer separated each color onto its own stone. The stones were then aligned and registered so that they would print correctly. A printer did not use just the three primary colors and black when printing a lithograph. Rather, various intensities of each color, grays, browns, and blacks were used to get the proper tone. While it is uncertain how many stones were used to produce this image, in some cases more than twenty stones were used to print a complicated color image.

Finally the last colored image to appear in *St. Nicholas* was a reproduction of Augustus Saint-Gaudens’s bas-relief medallion “Portrait of a Child,” January 1885 (figure 36). This reproduction, also a frontispiece, is simply a halftone of a photograph of a sculpture that was printed in sepia. The magnification of this piece clearly shows the pure while lines from a graver where the engraver “touched up” the plate.

Aside from the specially designed holiday covers, color illustrations do not reappear in *St. Nicholas* until the very last year of Dodge’s life. The editors announced the inclusion of color images in the “Editorial Notes” in November 1904:
All readers of St. Nicholas, we are sure, will welcome the news that, beginning with this number, illustrations in color are to appear, every month, throughout the new volume …

The inclusion of color within a publication for children should not be surprising, especially considering that these methods were further developed as a result of the growing publishing industry for children’s books and magazines. Perhaps the main reason for the earlier omission of color printing was that DeVinne found the methods of color printing to be too costly and time consuming, and perhaps less advanced than he would have liked. An editorial note found in the January 1883 issue apologized to the readers for not providing a colored frontispiece as promised. As a consolation, the writer of the editorial drew the readers’ attention to the beautiful artwork provided by Reginald Birch, and promised that a color frontispiece would appear in the next issue. The colored frontispiece never appeared and would not until November 1884 as a chromolithograph. This suggests that either DeVinne was having difficulty delivering the finished chromoxylograph on time for the publication’s deadline, or that he was not entirely pleased with the process and look of colored-wood engravings. When chromolithography was used it was only for one frontispiece and for special holiday covers. Most importantly and telling, they were not printed by DeVinne.

**Overlays**

Despite tight deadlines, DeVinne made sure that the illustrations in *St. Nicholas* were printed to the best of his ability. It was imperative for him to come close to perfection when printing the multitude of wood-engravings, line blocks, and halftones used in the pages of *St.

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108 Gascoigne, 29d.
109 “Editorial Notes,” *St. Nicholas Magazine* 10, no, 3 (January 1883)
Nicholas. From the development of calendared papers to the experiments in process printing, DeVinne took care that the resulting impressions were the best they could be. An important technique that he used to deepen the tone and therefore, heighten the contrast of the resulting images, particularly those produced by halftone, was a system of tissue overlays. The term “overlay” is a misnomer because the tissues were not placed on top of, or over, the paper or plate. Rather, the tissues were placed under the paper on which the image was printed. An overlay was made by first determining which part of the printed image needed to be darkened. Tissue was then cut to match the shape of that area. It was then pasted to a board that had been aligned and registered with the printing plate so that the tissued area corresponded exactly to the same area on the plate. The board was placed under the paper and a proof was pulled. The raised tissue area under the paper pushed the paper against the inked plate with more force than those areas without an overlay. This forced more ink onto the paper creating a deeper, darker tone. If a darker tone was desired another layer of tissue was added to the overlay. This method, combined with the touch ups provided by an engraver, created the contrast needed to make the early halftones more readable, and in turn, commercially successful.

The overlay process was tedious and time consuming, so much so that by the late 1890s experiments were being conducted to simplify the process. Two of these methods were either developed by DeVinne’s partnership with an outside entity, as was the case with the DeVinne-Bierstadt process, discussed in the last chapter, or were developed in house by DeVinne’s employees, as was the method developed by Walter J. Wickens, head of the engraving department, and Patrick M. Furlong, foreman of electrotyping. Both of these methods strove

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110 Tichenor, 113-114
to use the technology already being employed in DeVinne’s printing establishment to mechanize the process of overlays.

The study of the materials and methods of which *St. Nicholas* is made is akin to the study of a fine artist’s studio or working methods. In both cases, the resulting object is limited by the talent of its producers, and the material and technology available for its creation. In the case of *St. Nicholas*, the materials and ever-advancing reproduction methods used by DeVinne and Drake prove that the visual aspects of the magazine were just as important to its editors as the written features simply because so much time and money was spent perfecting the printing of images and the resultant artwork.
Chapter 6: The Manifestation of the Art and Aesthetic Education Program in St. Nicholas

The art and aesthetic education program in St. Nicholas was manifested in many ways. Through direct reproductions of paintings, sculpture and architecture, the style of the layouts, typeface, and illustrations, as well as in the written features about the history of art and artists, the editorial staff created a complex program designed to inspire, encourage, and teach readers, while promoting specific tastes, morals, and behavior. Methodically reviewing each issue revealed certain types of fine art and artistic styles preferred by the editors. This chapter discusses the types and styles of art featured in St. Nicholas. It will demonstrate how the magazine acted as a vehicle for the display of acceptable art and stylistic trends, thereby participating in the art and aesthetic educational agenda of the cultural elite.

The types and styles of art that are found in the magazine correspond to the trends in art collecting and the cultural preferences of the last quarter of the nineteenth-century in America. The arts of Antiquity, Medieval, Renaissance, Dutch and Spanish Baroque periods, as well as English, French, and American eighteenth-century art, Pre-Raphaelite painting, and French academic art, all appear as fine art reproductions. The illustrations and layouts reveal the influence of classical and Renaissance forms, French Beaux-arts, Japanese and Asian art, American Hudson River School, American genre painting, German Romanticism, and nineteenth-century British art, most notably Pre-Raphaelite art, Gothic Revival, Aestheticism, and Arts and Crafts. It is important to note that the publication of St. Nicholas paralleled the developments of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and early twentieth-century modernist styles in Europe. However, there are no reproductions of works by these later European modernists, and these styles are conspicuously absent from the pages of the magazine. As
further discussed below, Impressionist styles can be found in the atmospheric and loose illustrations of certain artists. Moreover, the subject matter is directly related to French and American Impressionist trends, such as the depiction of leisurely activities like boating and picnicking at the beach. In the rare cases that Post-Impressionists styles do make an appearance in *St. Nicholas* it is always within the personal styles of an illustrator, mostly notably that of Louis Loeb, who will be discussed later.

**Covers**

A discussion of the covers of *St. Nicholas* is important because they provide visual evidence of Dodge’s art and aesthetic education program and reinforce her statement that *St. Nicholas* must contain the finest art. Additionally, the cover designs were done in current aesthetic styles, demonstrating Drake and DeVinne’s involvement in the artistic design of books and magazines as promoted by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Throughout the thirty-two volumes studied, the main cover design of the individual numbers of *St. Nicholas* changed only five times. From November 1873 through October 1879 the cover of *St. Nicholas* featured a red and black design that contained no images other than a scroll at the top of the composition which announced the month and year of the issue, and abstracted vines and leaves that made up the background (figure 37). Much of the cover was composed of the title of the magazine and the publishing information. The entire design is framed by a black and red, geometric frame predominately made up of triangles and angular corner flourishes. The geometry of the frame compliments the more organic nature of the scrolling and floral abstractions. Its bold colors parallel those of the typeface thereby containing the lighter, more delicate floral design. The design does not give any indication as to what is contained within the thick paper wrappers.
Within each year, the December/Christmas number broke completely with the standard cover, sporting a special cover that was usually elaborately designed. Occasionally, the cover for the May number would contain a special design that was added to the standard cover. Two examples of the seasonal alterations to the covers of *St. Nicholas* are the Christmas Holiday number for December 1876 and the number for May 1877, both volume 3 (figures 38 and 39). The December issue is simply the standard cover with a diagonal, black banner that crosses the clover-shape and that contains the words “Christmas Holiday” in a white typeface. The typeface, itself, looks like it was written with blowing snow. No other alterations to the cover indicate the holiday or anything special that could possibly be contained within the magazine. The May 1877 number used precisely the same format, that of a banner that cut diagonally across the clover-shape. However, instead of containing words, the banner contained a frieze of illustrated figures (figure 40). These figures are dressed in a variety of historical fashions ranging from Medieval and Renaissance, to Elizabethan and early nineteenth-century. Men and women are shown dancing to the music of a piping fairy who is dressed in gossamer clothing and who has butterfly wings. The illustration is a relatively simple line drawing without excessive tonality. However, the outfits that the figures wear have the appearance of being truthful to life, yet symbolic of the periods they are meant to represent as a whole. The artist was obviously aware of historical fashions, probably through prints and other visual sources. Gothic Revival styles in design, architecture, and art had gained popularity in American as early as the 1840s, and continued throughout the rest of the nineteenth-century, culminating in what can be called “High Victorian Gothic” of the postbellum period.¹ This taste for medievalism can be traced to the Romantic

eclecticism of the mid-nineteenth century and the influence of John Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites, and later, William Morris, on the American cultural landscape. Through the influence of artists like John LaFarge and through the introduction of Ruskinian theory in American publications, Gothic style found an eager audience in the visual arts and in the literature of the last quarter of the nineteenth-century. *St. Nicholas* featured fiction and poetry that was set in medieval Europe, and also featured factual articles about writers, cultural mores, and the history of this period. Almost all were accompanied by illustrations done by artists who specialized in historic imagery like A. B. Brennan, Reginald Birch, and Howard Pyle. Pyle was particularly acclaimed for his accurate representations of history, teaching the many students who attended his Brandywine School of Illustration to be as authentic as possible when illustrating historical subjects. This particular banner was illustrated by none other than Howard Pyle and should be considered his first magazine cover.2

The first changes to the cover of *St. Nicholas* occurred with volume six and then again with volume seven (figures 41 and 42). These images and titles provide clues to the reader as to what kinds of features are contained inside the issue of the magazine. Both covers are composed of a center image surrounded by an architectural structure that acts as a framing device, which is then outlined and framed with a bold red line. Like the original cover, the predominant colors in the design are red and black. The top of the composition is composed of a black rectangle that rests on what appears to be the top of a cabinet. Done in the ground color of the paper, the design inside the rectangle takes the shape of the scrolled pediment of a Chippendale cabinet. Each arm of the pediment contains a reclining, classical, female figure. The one on the left is

2 “Letterbox,” *St. Nicholas Magazine* 4, no. 6 (May 1877): 508.
facing towards the viewer and appears to be in the middle of writing as she holds a quill pen to a
piece of paper. The one on the right has her back towards us. She is cradling a drawing board on
her lap and holds a stylus gracefully between her fingers, indicating that she is in the process of
drawing. These figures are symbolic of the two main features within the magazine, that of
literature and art.

Down the left and right sides of the composition are rectangular boxes set within niches
composed of abstracted architectural elements such as columns. The architectural elements are
left in the cream-colored ground of the paper, while the niches are done in the iconic, St.
Nicholas red. Each niche contains an image of a child, or a group of children, engaged in a
variety of activities that are labeled under each rectangle. The upper left niche entitled “nursery”
shows a female figure in a cap and day gown, reading to an infant in a cradle. The next is
labeled “Jack-in-the-Pulpit” and shows a minister with his arms spread open, preaching from a
pulpit to two figures who are below him and who look up at him. In the upper right corner
appear two lancet windows, indicating that this is set in a church. The next niche, entitled
“poetry” contains a girl riding a pegasus with a scroll in her hand. The next is labeled “travel” and
depicts a boy in a safari outfit, holding a rifle, and shaking hands with a hairy, goat-legged,
grotesque figure. Finally, the last niche on the bottom left depicts a toddler’s face that is ringed
with a design that reads as sun-rays. Under the face are two, tiny hands with curling fingers.
The caption reads “western hemisphere.”

Starting from the top, right side is an image of an infant perched on top a pile of books
and looking through a telescope. He is joined by another toddler who is studying a globe. The
caption reads, “science.” Both are dressed in flowing, classical togas. The next niche, entitled
“art,” contains the image of a nude boy who is turned away from us and who is drawing in a pad. The subject that he is studying is a Greek bust on a pedestal, surrounded by laurel leaves. A completed drawing sits at the boy’s feet. The next niche, entitled “sport,” depicts a young boy in a baseball uniform, swinging a baseball bat at an incoming ball. The next niche shows a boy in a rowboat sailing on a choppy sea. He is wearing a sailor’s hat and a sailor’s uniform, and is accompanied by a seagull. This niche is titled “adventure.” Finally, the last niche contains the same toddler-faced sun as its opposite column; however, this one is entitled “eastern hemisphere.” Both columns are connected with another black rectangle that is made up of three individual rectangles, all of which contain the publishing information. On either side of the central rectangle are two griffins.

As mentioned, the juxtaposition of images and titles provide the reader with information about the content of the magazine. Most notably, and directly across from each other, is the extremely popular department, “Jack-in-the-Pulpit” and the square containing “art.” There is no indication as to whether this refers to articles about art or if it refers to the actual art work and illustrations within the magazine. Its prominent placement on the cover of the magazine, along with the reference to drawing within one of the arms of the Chippendale scroll, demonstrates art’s importance to the magazine and its equal standing with the written features.

The central image of both covers depict the jolly, old Saint Nicholas sitting in a comfortable red armchair, flanked by a young girl and boy around whom he has his arms. The figures are done in the cream-colored ground of the paper, and are set against a black background.

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3 It is important to note that this image is of the saint and not of the modern “Santa Claus.” The modern image if Santa Claus was made popular by the political cartoonist, Thomas Nast, as early as 1862 in Harper’s Weekly.
that contains plant-like motifs. The words “Scribner’s Illustrated Magazine for Girls and Boys”
surround the head of St. Nicholas and are done in the same typeface as the main title. The
children are completely enveloped in his embrace as his robes encircle them. In both images he
is dressed in flowing robes, is bearded with a bald head, and has a halo behind his head with the
words “St. Nicholas” inscribed within. Both images depict an open book, perhaps *St. Nicholas
Magazine*, spread across his lap, leading the viewer to deduce that the good saint is reading to the
children. The children’s bodies are turned towards the seated saint and both seem to be holding
the book still on St. Nicholas’s lap.

However, the style of each center image is radically different from the other. In the
earlier model, the artist depicts the saint frontally with only his eyes turned down towards the
book. His left foot rests on a rectangular shape that contains the words, “Conducted by.” The
children are dressed in contemporary outfits and are both looking calmly at the book on St.
Nicholas’s lap. The drawing style is bold and linear, which is further translated through the
graphic nature of the engraving process.

The designs of the covers resemble the compositions of religious altarpieces with their
many niches, particularly those of the Northern Renaissance. The frontal nature of the central
image of the earlier cover has the aesthetic quality of a religious icon, which is completely lost
when the design is shifted to the later, more organic imagery. The illustrations in the niches
stylistically resemble efforts of early illustrations for children in their crudeness and simplicity.
Compared to the highly finished illustrations within the magazine, it can be assumed that this
particular aesthetic was specifically chosen by the editorial team. The archaic style of the
illustrations, and the classical and medieval references found in the clothing and settings of each
niche, point to a conscious decision to design the cover in the fashionable medieval aesthetic of the High Victorian Gothic. Additionally, the seventeenth-century styling of the niches links the modern magazine containing a myriad of photochemical reproductive processes and finely wrought illustrations, with the nascent efforts to visually stimulate children with crudely carved woodblock illustrations. These covers were not only meant to announce what was inside the wrappers, but they also link *St. Nicholas* to the history of publishing for children, of which it was the pinnacle.

In November 1885 the cover changed yet again, this time reflecting the stylistic tendencies associated with the American Renaissance (figure 43). Printed in sepia, umbra, and white on thick yellow paper, the design is rooted in classical and Renaissance traditions with romantic, Baroque flourishes. The artist, Sidney L. Smith, used a classical arch as a framing device for a pastoral landscape that unfolds into a deep space. The artist divided the landscape into two equal parts between the sky and the earth, and positioned the viewer high on a hilltop overlooking the sprawling vista to the distant horizon line. The sky contains a figure in a chariot that is being drawn by four horses. The figure is in a slight three-quarter view, is printed in a lighter and looser style, and contains lines radiating from it. According to an “Editorial Note” found in the November 1885 issue, this figure is both Apollo and the morning sun, indicating that the view we are looking at is towards the east.\(^4\) The classical archway is not attached to any other architectural detail, and therefore reads as a type of triumphal arch. The main elements of the arch — the pier, the attached columns, the springing, and the rounded arch — maintain a strictly classical aesthetic. The only ornamental detail on these basic elements can be found on

\(^4\) *St. Nicholas Magazine* 13, no. 1 (November 1885): 74.
the arch in the form of rosettes placed within coffers. The metope and vertical sides of the structure, however, contain what appears to be highly ornate, decorative relief sculptures. The metope is decorated with organic tendrils and festoons, and the side is decorated with vessels out of which spring curvilinear tendrils and leaves. Along the metope sit three putti on the left side, and one putti bearing a cornucopia on the right side. The putti on the left are nestled in curling leaves and are holding a shield or coat of arms that bears an image of a book on top of a palette that is surrounded by sunbeams. Between the putti is an elaborate festoon of ribbons and mums. Under their feet is a scrolled banner that appears hung across the archway. Printed inside the banner in Century compressed typeface is the title of the magazine. At the foot of the arch and to the left, sits another scrolled banner containing the rest of the title and the editorial information, also done in Century compressed. To the right and on top of curling leaves that are the mirror image of those above, are a quill pen, a pencil, and a medallion that contains the zodiac sign for the month of the current issue. Finally, the base of the archway contains the publisher's information.

The cover is illustrated in a very detailed and finely wrought manner with a concentration on realistic depictions and tonality. The use of shadows, achievable by the line block processes that I will discuss below, and the use a basic one-point perspective links this cover to the traditional Renaissance artistic practices being taught in art academies, and that were defining qualities of the styles associated with the American Renaissance. The imagery also connects the cover to the American Renaissance, particularly that of the arch, the associations with classical mythology, and the ornate detailing throughout.
Yet again, the references to the importance of art to the magazine are emblazoned on the cover of the magazine. As explained by Dodge in the “Editorial Note”:

We hope St. Nicholas will not seem like a stranger to you because it comes this month in a new and shining dress. Indeed, it should seem more familiar, — more like an old friend than ever, — because its new garb is so becoming and so beautifully symbolizes the spirit and the purpose of the magazine.

The cover which appears for the first time this month was designed by Mr. Sidney L. Smith, who was for some time associated with the LaFarge Decorative Arts Company of New York City. The beauty of the drawing speaks for itself, and can hardly fail to give pleasure and satisfaction. But it would be wrong to regard the design as a mere piece of decoration. The view through the graceful archway suggests the youthful outlook upon the world of nature and civilization; — and the morning of life is further symbolized by the sunshine, in which Apollo, who in the old mythologies, was the god of youth, and music, and light, is driving the chariot of the sun. In the upper right-hand corner, a little winged figure with a horn of plenty may well represent the unceasing abundance of stories, sketches, and verses that St. Nicholas offers to its readers; and in the opposite corner, three similar figures display the book and the palette (the seal of The Century Co), which stands for the work of author and artist combined. The same idea is suggested by the scroll and the pen and crayon in the lower right hand corner, and that part has also a special interest because, in the little circle there shown, there is to appear, each month, the sign of the zodiac for that month … and thus the cover, month by month, you can find the succession of the twelve signs that in old times symbolized the circuit of the year."

Here Dodge explains the allegorical meaning behind each detail in the design, concentrating on the relationship between the artist and author, art and writing. It goes without saying that the superiority of the magazine depends on the congenial relationship between both, the visual and the verbal. Once again, the ideology surrounding art in Dodge's original prospectus is visually displayed on the cover, and is expressed in her explanation of the cover. Interestingly, the landscape displayed on the cover faces the rising sun to the east. While Dodge explained that this represents the youthful stage in life, it can be argued that the focus towards the east can also symbolize the fact that St. Nicholas was published in New York City. As such, Apollo as the sun

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represents the magazine, both of which bring aesthetically sound writing and art, and inspiration to its readers. Admittedly, this reading of the image might be a stretch, but it is intriguing that the artist portrayed his vista facing east when the convention of many American landscapists was to concentrate their focus towards the west and western expansion.

In November 1895, the cover of *St. Nicholas* was drastically simplified (figure 44). The publishers returned to the iconic red and black ink on a heavy, cream-colored paper. They also returned to a design that was void of figural imagery, opting to concentrate on the design of the typeface and on decorative, organic, interwoven plant tendrils. The design is extremely graphic in nature, and is quite a departure from the more expressive covers of the past. The elements in the design are centrally aligned and have sufficient negative space between them, creating a balanced and clear cover that is easy to read and visually rational. There is obvious attention given to the alignment, placement, and construction of each letter, and to the visual impact of the letters on the cream-colored paper. As previously discussed in chapter four, DeVinne was actively involved in the development of typeface and was an outspoken advocate for clear typeface rooted in traditional letterpress. He was also greatly interested in the design aesthetics associated with William Morris’s experiments in book design. Although DeVinne disagreed with Morris’s reliance on ornamentation for page design, preferring the words to speak for themselves, he was influenced by Morris’s design aesthetic. This can be seen in the use of a repetitive, interlocking floral frame, typeface design rooted in traditional letterpress, and the careful execution of the printer’s craft. Even though colorful, lithographic posters announced the new numbers of *St. Nicholas* or the specific features of the current month in booksellers’ shops (figures 45 - 46), the covers of the magazine reflected DeVinne’s interest in the discourse
surrounding the book arts and what would become graphic design. This cover would be used throughout the rest of the 1890s and into the first decade of the twentieth-century. Eventually, however, these simple, graphic covers with their roots in the Arts and Crafts aesthetic would give way to the colorful, figurative, lithographic covers influenced by the posters of the 1890s.

The boards used to bind the volumes of *St. Nicholas* were heavy cardboard covered in red cloth, and embossed with the iconic black and gold, morning-glory design that was eventually modified to accommodate the larger pages, and then again when Scribner & Company became The Century Company. The original cover was designed by the English illustrator Walter Crane (figure 47). Crane created a frame from twig-like forms that appear to be tied together in the corners to create a rectangular trellis. Starting in the upper-left corner and continuing into much of the upper half of the composition are the vine-like tendrils, heart-shaped leaves, and trumpet-shaped flowers of a climbing morning-glory. Much of the plant is done in the same embossed, black ink as the trellis. However, three full blooms and one bud to the left of the composition are printed in gold. These blooms encircle a black banner that is framed in gold and contains the title *St. Nicholas*, done in the same typeface as the original monthly cover. While plant-like motifs were popular designs for magazine and book design during this period, the aesthetic of this cover is specifically linked to English Art Nouveau, as seen in the trellis frame and the meandering tendrils of the morning-glories.

**Fine Art Reproductions**

The most obvious manifestation of *St. Nicholas*’s cultural program lay in the reproductions of fine art and architecture that were usually accompanied by art historical facts, biographies of the artists, or other factual information. Sometimes these reproductions would be
used to illustrate other features like travelogues or fictional stories about the artists or characters in the painting; or would stand alone as the frontispiece to the issue. The first example of fine art reproduction occurred as early as the third issue of the first volume (January 1874) with the wood-engraved frontispiece of Paul Delaroche’s *The Princes in the Tower* (figure 48). This frontispiece was accompanied by a historical account of the murder of the young Edward, the Prince of Wales, and Richard, the Duke of York, by their uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, written by Mary Mapes Dodge. In this short essay, she identified Delaroche as the painter of the portraits, but did not give any information about him or the painting itself.

The first volume of *St. Nicholas* also contained the aforementioned obituary of Sir Edwin Landseer, which included a brief description and a wood-engraved reproduction of *The Sleeping Bloodhound* (figure 1). The volume ended with Sara Keables Hunt’s “A Letter from Egypt,” a travelogue of the author’s visit to Egypt, accompanied by three wood-engravings depicting “The Hall of Columns, at Medunet Haboo,” “Statue of Rameses the Great (from a photograph),” and “Statue of Memnon (from a photograph)” (figures 49-51).

One of the most confounding reproductions in *St. Nicholas* was that of the *Venus de Milo*, November 1874 (figure 52). This wood-engraving was printed with an historical account of the sculpture that explained the complicated history surrounding its eventual placement in the Louvre. What is so extraordinary about this image is that it depicts a nude female, something that Dodge did not permit in her magazine. Furthermore, nudity in art was still not truly accepted by the American public, even for adults. Therefore, the reproduction of a nude figure in a children’s magazine was an extremely bold decision on Dodge’s part. Granted, the essay that accompanied the image made no mention of her nudity. Poetically written, the description of the
sculpture concentrated on its beauty, nobility, and dignity. It also repeated academic concepts of the perfection of the Greek body through the cultivation of a natural and simple life; therefore, presenting an example for the reader to follow. Although there is no proof of parents’ and other adults’ disapproval of such imagery, one gets the sense that Dodge might have overstepped her bounds with this reproduction because this was the first and last time nudity in art was shown in *St. Nicholas*.

Many of the reproductions of fine art accompanied individual essays about the artists. These biographies often concentrated on the artist’s tenacity, hard work, and dedication. For example, Rebecca Harding Davis’s essay about Sir Joshua Reynolds, entitled “About the Painter of Little Penelope,” November 1875 (figure 53), focused on a brief description of the sitter in the portrait and then on Reynolds’s life. Davis ended her biography by stating that:

> Boys who read this little story will notice that it was by no sudden ‘spurt’ of genius, no spasmodic effect that [Reynolds] reached this place. He found out the work for which he was fitted, and gave himself to it patiently, both in brain and body. Sir Joshua himself tells it all in a line, in his advice to a young artist: ‘The man determined to excel must go to his work, whether willing or unwilling, morning, noon and night; and he will find it to be no play, but, on the contrary, very hard labor.’

The reproduction of Reynolds’s work provides an example to the reader of the logical end of the hard work and dedication described in Harding’s account. In this way, both image and text serve to inspire the reader to follow the example of Reynolds: one must find his or her true vocation and dedicate “brain and body” to its pursuit. If this is done, then one will be successful like Reynolds.

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Some artists’ biographies are devoid of such didacticism, and rather focus romantically on the artist’s relationship with children, as seen in Ripley Hitchcock’s essay “Millet and His Children,” January 1887. This article begins by discussing the interaction of the French artist Jean François Millet with his grandchildren and the children of the village in which he lived:

There sat Father Millet, his soft, dark eyes shining with merriment, his brave, kindly face all smiles for the grandchildren and the others who, unreproved, pulled his full black beard or climbed upon his knees to rumple his dark hair. Sometimes he sang jovial old French songs praising the life of the laborer among the vines. When other artists, like his friend Rousseau, were present, they made rebuses, filling out a word by a sketch. Hitchcock goes on to discuss the sketches that Millet made for these children (figure 54), linking the subject matter to the artists’ paintings (figure 55). In this way, the author introduced the art of Millet through the artists’ relationship with children, who then become surrogates for the child-reader.

Contemporary American art was also featured in St. Nicholas, though not so often as European examples. Instead, most contemporary American artists contributed to the magazine as illustrators, as seen in Frederic Remington’s “Don José’s Vicious Little Mustang Bolted in Among Them,” from “Juan and Juanita,” by Frances C. Baylor, November 1886 (figure 56); and the illustration accompanying the poem, “Uncle John's Coat,” written and illustrated by Cecelia Beaux, January 1885 (figure 57). When contemporary American painting was featured, it was often as an illustration to a fictional or non-fictional story. This can be seen in the use of William Merritt Chase’s Wolf-Reared Boy (figure 58) to illustrate Charles L. Brace’s “Wolf-Reared Children,” May 1882.

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7 Ripley Hitchcock, “Millet and His Children,” St. Nicholas Magazine 14, no. 3 (January 1887): 166.
Besides the visual experience of looking at works of art, *St. Nicholas* also provided its readers an education in art history through the writing of respected authors Clara Erskine Clement and Charles H. Caffin. These authors wrote numerous books on art and aesthetic education for adults and children, including Clement’s *Legendary and Mythological Art* (1871), *Handbooks of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture* (1883-1886), and *Women Artists in Europe and America* (1903), and Caffin’s *American Masters of Painting* (1902), *How to Study Pictures by Means of a Series of Comparisons of Painters and Paintings* (1905), and *A Child’s Guide to Pictures* (1908). In January 1881, Clara Erskine Clement’s series, “Stories of Art and Artists” began with a discussion of ancient Greek art. This series was published sporadically until September 1886, ending with a discussion of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century English painting. Clement’s series focused primarily on those artists who were considered acceptable and proper in Victorian America, and on styles that were primarily based in classical forms. Her preference for classicism is best demonstrated in her explanation as to why Egyptian art was excluded in her history:

> Painting was practiced in Egypt 3000 years before the birth of Christ. But Egypt lost her place among the great powers of the world, and her art declined and died. When, therefore, in these days, we speak of the origin of painting or of sculpture, we mean that of classical art, — or European art, which is traced back to the Greeks, — and there are many interesting stories told of the ancient artists.

In this short paragraph, Clement expresses a common prejudice, that European art is superior to non-European art simply because its roots can be traced to classical Greek art. Her bias can be seen throughout her art historical series since she concentrated primarily on European art that was influenced by classical models (figure 59). Throughout the series, her language constructs a cultural history built by artists who were engaged in noble acts and displayed...
attributes of steadfastness, determination, genius, morality, truthfulness, and a love of beauty. As proven in the discussion of Reynolds, this language, combined with reproductions of European masterpieces, provided the reader with a stellar example to follow. In addition, Clement’s historical account of art movements and artists’ lives directed the reader to look at the art provided and consider it as both a historical artifact and an object of beauty capable of inspiring noble and lofty thoughts and actions.

Finally, in volume thirty-two (1905), Charles H. Caffin’s series, “How to Study Pictures,” was published in every issue of the year. Caffin was a popular writer of art history whose words were geared towards the general reader and not the scholar. He advocated for art education in America, especially within the family and public school system. Caffin’s series relinquished the antiquated language of the connoisseur that is found in Clement’s series and replaced it with language that stressed the importance of formal analysis. The inclusion of art historical facts combined with formal analysis created a curriculum that could ideally be mastered by every reader of the magazine. Like Clement, Caffin concentrated solely on the “great masters” of European painting, especially those with classical influences. Most importantly, the paintings were reproduced by the halftone process and not by finely wrought wood-engravings, as seen in the reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Madonna of the Rocks*, December 1904 (figure 60).

**Styles of Illustrations and Layouts**

The art and aesthetic education program in *St. Nicholas* can also be seen in the stylistic tendencies of the illustrations. As discussed in chapter three, Alexander W. Drake oversaw the artistic training of many of the illustrators associated with the magazine. However, some illustrators received their initial art training in the various American art academies like the
Pennsylvania Academy of Art or the National Academy of Design. Those who studied at the academies received classical training that stressed drawing from plaster casts of ancient sculpture and drawing from life. The standard curriculum stressed the classical forms associated with academic art and can been seen in John La Farge’s illustration, “The Crooked Backed Traveler Tells a Story to the King,” from January 1878 (figure 61).

Two illustrations in volume three of *St. Nicholas* demonstrate that the artists who contributed to the magazine were well aware of artistic styles of previous generations. This can be seen in the illustration “The Valley’s Full of the Roar of Waterfalls” by an unknown artist for Harriet Prescott Spofford’s “Arneld and His Violin,” November 1875 (figure 62). At first glance, this illustration appears to be a direct copy of a painting by a Hudson River School artist; however, none exist of this scene. Instead, the illustrator appears to be depicting a view of the famous Kaaterskill Falls in New York State that Thomas Cole painted in 1826 (figure 63). While Cole’s painting is of the entire falls seen from some distance, the illustration appears to be a close-up of the upper part of the falls in Cole’s painting. Perhaps the illustrator was inspired by Cole’s work, or perhaps the illustrator drew a similar impression while viewing Kaaterskill Falls, a popular site for visitors.

Contemporary artistic styles like those associated with the Pre-Raphaelites and Gothic Revival, British Aestheticism, and Art and Crafts dominated the stylistic tendencies of the illustrations and layouts, especially throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Medieval themes and stories were prevalent in *St. Nicholas*, as seen in the illustration “Without your help, my lord! Without your help,” (figure 64) done by G. F. Barnes for E. S. Brooks’s historical narrative, “Historic Girls,” January 1885. A more direct reference to the style of the Pre-Raphaelites can be
seen in the frontispiece, “Spring” for the April 1884 issue (figure 65). This illustration depicts a young woman who is reading a book out-of-doors in what appears to be a field for grazing sheep. She is wearing medieval garb and her hair is loosely pulled back, but allowed to cascade over her shoulders. This illustration does not have a direct correspondence in Pre-Raphaelite painting; however, it has the same stylistic feeling as John Everett Millais’s *Mariana in the Moated Grange*, 1850-51 (figure 66), and William Morris’s *La Belle Iseult*, 1858 (figure 67). The same can be said for the illustration that accompanies the poem “Good News on Christmas Morning,” by an unknown author and illustrator (figure 68). The shape of the illustration and the rendering of the figure of Christ is reminiscent of William Holman Hunt’s *The Light of the World*, 1851-53 (figure 69). Medieval themes and Pre-Raphaelite styles can also be seen in many full-paged, engrossed layouts such as the page layouts by Jessie McDermott (figure 70) for Margaret Johnson’s “The Fairy Gift,” November 1881; and Reginald Birch’s page layouts for S. Conant Foster’s “Sweet Miss Industry,” December 1884 (figure 71).

Likewise, “Butterflies and Sea Robins,” illustrator unknown, from March 1880 (figure 72) reminds the viewer of a gray-tone, stained glass window done in the style of Louis Comfort Tiffany or John La Farge. All that is missing from this image is the incredible, opalescent color found in the glasswork of these artists. Furthermore, the graphic boldness and clarity of line found in Arts and Crafts styles are found in the illustration by H. L. Bridwell of “Truths and Roses,” April 1888 (figure 73), and the full-page layout by Katharine Pyle for the poem “The Popular Poplar Tree,” by Blanche Willis Howard, January 1889 (figure 74).

Japanese art takes a prominent role in the illustrations found in *St. Nicholas*. Western interest in Japanese art and design began immediately after Commodore Matthew C. Perry
forced Japan to sign a treaty with the United States in 1853, a move that opened Japanese ports to Western trade. The interest in Japanese art and design only increased with the display of Japanese goods at the British International Exposition of 1862. The Japanese aesthetic in St. Nicholas takes two forms: that of direct facsimiles of Japanese art and design, and that of stylistic inspiration for Western artists. The first form can be seen in the illustrations for William Elliot Griffis’s essay, “The Whale-Hunters of Japan,” December 1882. Both illustrations, “Attacking the Whale” (figure 75) and “Drawing the Whale Ashore by the Windlass,” (figure 76) are facsimiles of Japanese prints and therefore, maintain the Japanese graphic aesthetic. However, Reginald Birch’s illustrations for M. C. Griffis’s story, “Little Kinè,” March 1885, have the trappings of Japanese culture, but lack the decorative and graphic aesthetic. Instead, Birch preserves Western classical construction, while dressing his characters in Japanese costumes (figure 77).

As previously noted, modern art styles such as those associated with Post-Impressionism did not make their way into St. Nicholas. The preferred types and styles of art for the magazine were based on academic, conservative models. However, that is not to say that modern artistic styles did not influence those of individual artists. This is best seen in George W. Edwards’s illustration “Burt Resolves to Go Whale-Hunting” (figure 78) for Hjalmer Hjorth Boyesen’s story “How Burt Went Whale Hunting,” August 1882. Louis Loeb’s illustration for Maurice Thompson’s “The Orchard on the Hill,” October 1893 (figure 79), contains the atmospheric haziness of Impressionism. Through the numerous reproductions of fine art and the rich variety

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of styles that I have discussed here, *St. Nicholas* introduced its readers to the fundamentals of art education and aesthetic taste.
Conclusion:

As I have shown here, art and aesthetic education was an important part of the editorial program of *St. Nicholas Magazine*. This program was manifested both in the fine art and architectural reproductions and articles featured in the magazine, and in the styles of the illustrations and layouts. Like the art museums in American cities, *St. Nicholas* provided its readers with a comprehensive survey of the artistic periods and artists that were part of the accepted art historical canon promoted by the cultural elite. Contemporary styles, styles influenced by Japanese and Asian art, and those based on traditional academic forms were found in the overall design and layout of the magazine and, most importantly, in the individual artistic styles of contributing illustrators like Howard Pyle, Jessie McDermott, Reginald Birch, and Kenyon Cox. Furthermore, American artists like William Merritt Chase, Frederic Remington, Thomas Moran, and John LaFarge contributed to *St. Nicholas*, providing its readers with examples of some of the finest art produced in America at the time.

By including examples of fine art and current aesthetic styles it was the goal of the editorial and production team to train the eyes of their readers and to instill a preference for a certain aesthetic taste. Educating the public in appropriate taste was believed to raise the level of national taste, allowing America to culturally compete on an international stage. Training readers to appreciate certain styles created a buying public that would, it was hoped, support the arts in America. Taking the diversity of the reading audience into consideration, aesthetic training was also directed at the working classes whose job it was to produce aesthetically pleasing objects for mass consumption. A rejection of the base and vulgar by all classes would
not only support American artists, but would also improve the design and quality of consumer goods.

Furthermore, as I have shown here, it was believed that supplying the masses with examples of beautiful or moralistically didactic art would have a positive and morally uplifting affect on viewers. Images that visually told a moral story, or depicted notable men and women, or illustrated important historical events were often expounded upon by enthusiastic authors who dwelled on the moral compunction or honor of the work of art, artists, or those people depicted. Finally, in line with the ideology of the Genteel Tradition, a work's beauty was often described in terms of its assumed moralistic and inspiring influence.

The art and aesthetic education program in *St. Nicholas* was aligned with the educational mission of the growing number of municipal art museums being incorporated in American cities in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century. Like *St. Nicholas*, museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art (founded in 1870, opened in 1872) and the Boston Museum of Fine Art (founded in 1870, opened in 1876) opened their doors with the goal to inspire and morally influence their audiences, to show examples of good taste, and to provide worthy and educational entertainment and reprieve from everyday life.1 Comparing the goals of late nineteenth-century art museums with those expressed in Dodge's foundational letter it becomes clear that art and aesthetic education in America was promoted in a variety of forms that pervaded private and public life on various socioeconomic levels. Furthermore, even though museums displayed art on walls and in display cases and *St. Nicholas* on paper in a bound magazine, both carried out an important and very similar cultural task: to educate, entertain, and inspire.

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A successful art and aesthetic educational program in America depended on magazines like *St. Nicholas* simply because they had a greater reach than the art museums. While some critics like E. L. Godkin argued that there was no substitute for an original work of art, he also argued that a good reproduction like those used by Scribner/The Century would at least inform the viewer of proper taste and inspire them to see the original. Additionally, the moral instruction of good art could be successfully transmitted through the printed medium.\(^2\) It goes without saying that a museum’s educational reach was limited to those who actually visited the galleries and, in some cases, those who were able to purchase the museum catalogue if there was one. Visiting a museum required the money and leisure to do so, but also depended on the museum’s hours of operation and visitation policies, things that often limited the audience to certain socioeconomic spheres.

*St. Nicholas*, however, reached an average circulation of 70,000 copies a month by 1925.\(^3\) This circulation number only includes readers who actually subscribed to the magazine and the numbers sold at retail establishments. The circulation number does not include those who read the magazine in libraries, schools, or churches, and who received used copies from well-off families. Scholars may never know the exact reach of *St. Nicholas*. However, it far exceeded that of the municipal museums in the nineteenth-century. Its portability and the types of art and styles it featured make its cultural influence important to this or any study of art and aesthetic education in America. Magazines, especially those linked to the Genteel Tradition, were vital in


distributing proper cultural ideals because of their high circulation numbers, their ability to move freely between classes, and their distribution across physical distances.

However, the question remains: did it work? Did the readers notice the visual components of the magazine; and did the visual components have an effect on the reader? Were the readers engaged in looking at the art? The answer to these questions can be found within the multitude of letters printed in “The Letterbox” department.

“The Letterbox” contained letters from readers, young and old, from all over the world. Many of the letters contain valuable information about how readers interacted with the magazine itself. More importantly, some letters also described what readers thought about the art historical features, or how they used the art in St. Nicholas. For example, a letter from Beatrice Brown described how she created personalized writing paper for her sister by decorating the corners of each page with a small watercolor painting. In describing the process, she stated:

Many pretty pictures can be taken from the magazine. Fluffy is a very cunning little girl to paint. The poem and illustrations about her are in the May number, 1877. Another good thing for painting is in the February number of the same year; it is three little children crying. Each figure makes a complete picture.

Mary Miller Mathews, from Lewisbury, West Virginia, tells “Dear St. Nicholas” that “Mother cut out some of the pictures to frame. I think the picture of Raphael is beautiful.” Another reader, Winifred Hall, from Russell, Kansas, states that she has “a folio that I call the St. Nicholas Folio, and I keep all the pictures in the front of St. Nicholas. Some of them are quite beautiful.”

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4 “Letterbox,” St. Nicholas Magazine 9, no. 1 (November 1881): 85
5 “Letterbox,” St. Nicholas Magazine 10, no. 4 (February 1883): 317
6 “Letterbox,” St. Nicholas Magazine 24, no. 10 (August 1897): 876
Other readers offered their critique of the art historical features, like Alan S. from Winnetka, Illinois:

I do not believe there ever was a more charming series than the ‘Stories of Art and Artists,’ or the papers on the great musicians, ‘From Bach to Wagner.’ Dear St. Nicholas, do give us some more of the same sort! I read them over and over again, and feel like another fellow for days afterward. I never tire of hearing how those great souls lived and struggled; enjoyed, suffered, and fought; triumphed and were defeated, just like common people. It is tiresome to preach and moralize, and yet I can not help saying that every boy and girl must be better and happier after reading the record of those inspired lives. For nowhere does one more fully realize that there is something better than money and worldly goods, and a power stronger than poverty and suffering and the contempt of an ignorant multitude.”

Obviously for Alan, the art and aesthetic education program worked. Moreover, it has inspired him to continue the rhetoric of the cultural crusaders. He was not alone. Gwendonlen Tugman, of Brighton, Massachusetts, wrote:

Dear St. Nicholas: I want to write and tell you how much I have enjoyed your article of ‘How to Study Pictures.’

I belong to an art club, and am secretary of it. Every week we take up a new artist and write about him in books which we have, and if there is anything about him in St. Nicholas, the president reads it to us …

These letters demonstrate that the art and aesthetic program in St. Nicholas had an impact on its readers. Not only did many of them utilize the art for their own artistic creations and for their own education, some of them like Alan and Gwendonlen, continued the agenda of the cultural elites in their own sphere of influence. The visual aspects of St. Nicholas are intrinsically linked to the trends in the American cultural landscape and therefore, should be considered as an important part of American visual culture. St. Nicholas Magazine must be

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7 “Letterbox,” St. Nicholas Magazine 17, no. 11 (September 1890): 980.
considered a portable art museum, one which introduced children to their first art experience and which was designed specifically for art and aesthetic education.
Appendix


“Sometimes I feel like rushing through the world with two placards — one held aloft in my right hand, BEWARE OF CHILDREN’S MAGAZINE! the other flourished in my left, CHILD’S MAGAZINE WANTED! A magazine for little ones was never so much needed, and such harm is done by nearly all that are published. In England, especially, the so-called juvenile periodicals are precisely what they ought not to be. In Germany, though better, they too often distract sensitive little souls with grotesquerie. Our magazines timidly approach the proper standard in some respects, but fall far short in others. We edit for the approval of fathers and mothers and endeavor to make the child’s monthly a milk-and-water variety of the adult periodical. But, in fact, the child’s magazine needs to be stronger, truer, bolder, more uncompromising than the other. Its cheer must be of the birdsong, not of condescending editorial babble. If it means freshness and heartiness, and life and joy, and its words are simply, directly, and musically put together, it will trill its own way. We must not help it overmuch. In all except skillful handling of methods, we must be as little children if we would enter this kingdom.

If now and then the situation have fun in it, if something tumble unexpectedly, if the child-mind is surprised into an electric recognition of comical incongruity, so that there is a reciprocal ‘ha, ha!’ between the printed page and the little reader, well and good. But, for humanity’s sake, let there be no editorial grimacing, no tedious vaulting back and forth over the grim railing that incloses halt and lame old jokes long ago turned in there to die.

Let there be no sermonizing either, no wearisome spinning out of facts, no rattling of the dry bones of history. A child’s magazine is its pleasure-ground. Grown people go to their
periodicals for relaxation, it is true; but they also go for information, for suggestion, and for today’s fashion in literature. Besides, they begin, now-a-days, to feel that they are behind the age if they fail to know what the April *Jig-jig* says about so and so, or if they have not read B—’s much-talked-of poem in the last *Argosy*. Moreover, it is ‘the thing’ to have the *Jig-jig* or the *Argosy* on one’s drawing-room table. One must read the leading periodicals or one is nobody.

But with children the case is different. They take up their monthly or weekly because they wish to, and if they don’t like it they throw it down again. Most children of the present civilization attend school. Their little heads are strained and taxed with the day’s lessons. They do not want to be bothered nor amused nor taught nor petted. They just want to have their own way over their own magazine. They want to enter the one place where they can come and go as they please, where they are not obliged to mind, or say ‘yes ma’am’ and ‘yes sir,’ — where, in short, they can live a brand-new, free life of their own for a little while, accepting acquaintances as they choose and turning their backs without ceremony upon what does not concern them. Of course they expect to pick up odd bits and treasures, and to now and then ‘drop in’ familiarly at an air castle, or step over to fairy-land. They feel their way, too, very much as we old folk do, toward sweet recognitions of familiar day-dreams, secret goodesses, and all the glorified classics of the soul. We who have strayed farther from these, thrill even to meet a hint of them in poems and essays. But what delights us in Milton, Keats, and Tennyson, children often find for themselves in stars, daisies, and such joys and troubles as little ones know. That this comparison holds, is the best we can say of our writers. If they make us reach forth our hands to clutch the star or the good-deed candle-blaze, what more can be done?
Literary skill in its highest is but the subtle thinning of the veil that life and time have thickened. Mrs. Browning paid her utmost tribute to Chaucer when she spoke of

“__________ his infantine

Familiar clasp of things divine.”

The *Jig-jig* and *Argosy* may deal with Darwinism broadly and fairly as they. The upshot of it all will be something like

The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one
‘Hickery, dickery, dock!
And down she ran —
Hickery, dickery dock!’

And whatever Parton or Arthur Helps may say in that stirring article, ‘Our Country Today,’ its substance is anticipated in —

‘Little Boy Blue!
Come, blow your horn!
The cow’s in the meadow
Eating the corn.’

So we come to the conviction that the perfect magazine for children lies folded at the heart of the ideal best magazine for grown-ups. Yet the coming periodical which is to make the heart of baby-America glad must not be a chip of the old Maga block, but an outgrowth from the old-young heart of Maga itself. Therefore, look to it that it be strong, warm, beautiful, and true.

Let the little magazine-readers find what they look for and be able to pick up what they find. Boulders will not go into tiny baskets. If it so happen that the little folks know some one jolly, sympathetic, hand-to-hand personage who is sure to turn up here and there in every number of the magazine or paper, very good: that is, if they happen to like him. If not, beware! It will soon
join the ghosts of dead periodicals; or, if it do not, it will live on only in that slow, drag gin
eexistence which is worse that death.

A child’s periodical must be pictorially illustrated, of course, and the pictures must have
the greatest variety consistent with simplicity, beauty and unity. They should be heartily
conceived and well executed; and they must be suggestive, attractive and epigrammatic. If it be
only the picture of a cat, it must be so like a cat that it will do its own purring, and not sit a dead,
stuffed thing, requiring the editor to purr for it. One of the sins of this age is editorial dribbling
over inane pictures. The time to shake up a dull picture is when it is in the hands of the artist and
engraver, and not when it lies, a fact accomplished, before keen eyes of little folk. Well enough
got the editor to stand ready to answer questions that would naturally be pit to the flesh-and-
blood father, mother, or friend standing by. Well enough, too, for the picture to cause a whole
tangle of interrogation-marks in the child’s mind. It need not be elaborate, nor exhaust its theme,
but what it attempts to do it must do well, and the editor must not over-help or hinder. He must
give just what the child demands, and to do this successfully is a matter of instinct, without
which no man should presume to be a child’s editor and go unhung.

Doubtless a great deal of instruction and good moral teaching may be inculcated in the
pages of a magazine; but it must be by hints dropped incidentally here and there; by a few brisk,
hearty statements of the difference between right and wrong; a sharp, clean thrust at falsehood, a
sunny recognition of truth, a gracious application of politeness, an unwilling glimpse of the
odious doings of the uncharitable and base. In a word, pleasant, breezy things may linger and
turn themselves this way and that. Harsh, cruel facts — if they must come, and sometimes it is
important that they should — must march forward boldly, say what they have to say, and go.
The ideal child’s magazine, we must remember, is a pleasure-ground where butterflies flit gayly [sic] hither and thither; where flowers quietly spread their bloom; where wind and sunshine play freaks of light and shadow; but where toads hop quickly out of sight and snakes dare not show themselves at all. Wells and fountains there may be in the grounds, but water must be drawn from the one in right trim, bright little buckets; and there must be no artificial coloring of the other, nor great show-cards about it, saying, ‘Behold! A fountain.’ Let its own flow and sparkle proclaim it.
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