

# Annie People



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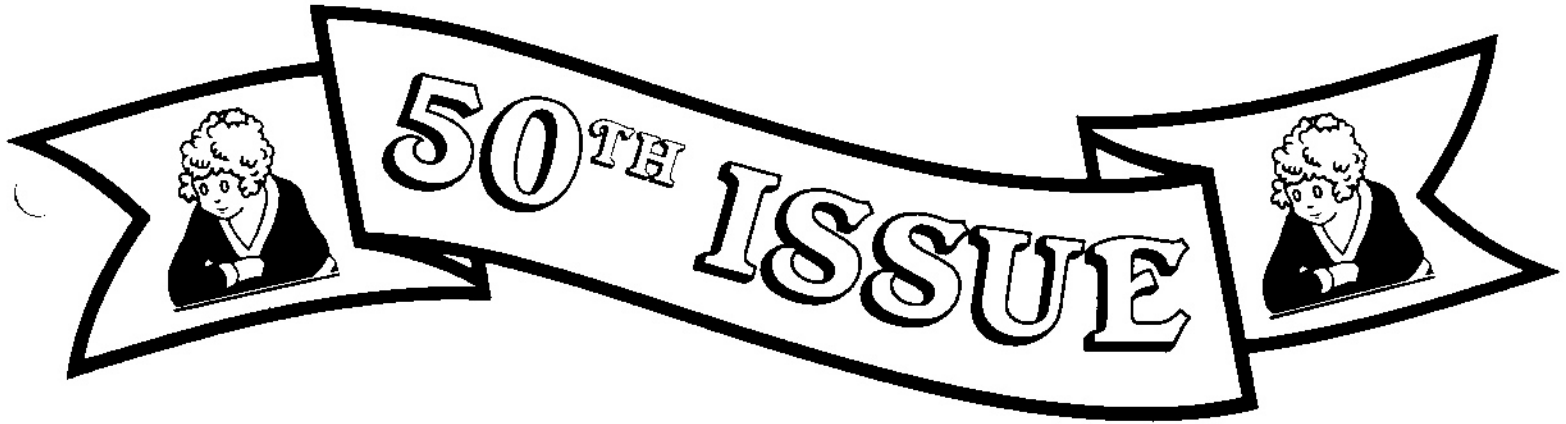
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## 50 "ANNIE-VERSARIES"

by Tricia Trozzi

In honor of this being the 50th issue of Annie People, we present a list of 50 significant dates in the history of Little Orphan Annie. Through comics, radio, the stage, and movies, Annie has been a significant figure in popular culture for sixty-seven years. Of course this list is not complete, but here, grouped chronologically by subject, are some landmarks of Annie's long, lucid, and legendary life. Leapin' Lizards!

1. **August 5, 1924** - Little Orphan Annie is born! A new cartoon strip appears in the pages of the New York Daily News depicting the life and hard times of a little red-haired orphan girl with curiously blank eyes. Soon this comic will become one of the most popular newspaper strips in America.
2. **January 20, 1894** - The creator of Annie, "Daddy", Sandy, Punjab, the Asp, and a legion of other memorable characters, Harold Gray, is born on this date in Illinois. Before creating LOA, he was an assistant to Sidney Smith on The Gumps strip. Gray's political views and socially relevant stories guaranteed that LOA would always be famous, if not occasionally notorious.

3. **September 27, 1924** - A moment in comics history: Annie meets Oliver Warbucks, who tells her, "Listen here, don't you ever dare to call me Mr. Warbucks again....you call me DADDY--see?" With that, a great partnership was formed that has survived bankruptcy, separations, accidents, and even a faked death (Warbucks', in the famous 1944 sequence).
4. **November 2, 1924** - Harold Gray begins Sunday strips. At first, these pages were self-contained jokes or separate stories from the daily strips, but by 1931 the dailies and the Sundays were part of the same story continuity.
5. **January 5, 1925** - Another moment in comics history: Annie rescues a puppy from some bullies and names him Sandy. Another lifelong bond is made, as Sandy accompanies Annie on almost all her adventures from then on. Drawn so he resembles an Airedale, Sandy was the only character to actually grow up in the strip.
6. **October 27 and October 28, 1925** - Annie fans, as devoted then as now, besieged the Chicago Tribune with irate phone calls when the paper suddenly dropped the strip. The next day there was a front-page apology from the editors and two Annie strips to make up for their indiscretion.
7. **November 16, 1927** - Annie is living with kindly Mrs. Pewter, who decides that Annie needs a new dress. The dress she makes for Annie is red with white collar and cuffs, and a trademark hereafter.
8. **May 9, 1968** - Harold Gray died in California at age 74. He had been ill for months and had had his cousin Robert Leffingwell help him letter his last strips, the only time he ever had help in creating LOA.
9. **July 21, 1968** - The last strip drawn by Harold Gray was published on this date. The strip had been losing popularity during the late '60s, and the artists who took over the comic after Gray died nearly destroyed the image of Annie entirely. Luckily, this unpopularity was only temporary.
10. **April 6, 1931** - Adventure Time With Orphan Annie, sponsored by Ovaltine, becomes the first radio show for children to be broadcast nationally six times a week. The theme song becomes extremely famous, and kids send in dimes and Ovaltine wrappers to get shake-up mugs and other Annie items.
11. **December 24, 1932** - The first movie called Little Orphan Annie is released by RKO and stars Mitzi Green (article on the film in AP #7, January 1984).
12. **November 30, 1938** - The second movie called Little Orphan Annie is released by Paramount and stars Ann Gillis. Apparently, this film was a semi-musical, as we at AP recently found a song folio of songs from the movie.
13. **August 10, 1976** - A brand-new fledgling musical comedy called Annie opens at the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, CT. Hurricane "Belle," cast changes, and terrible reviews plague this early stage of the production. Can this comic strip be transformed into a stage presentation?
14. **January 22, 1977** - Rehearsals begin for the pre-Broadway tryout of the musical. An exciting journey in the development of a show takes place over the next three months.
15. **March 1, 1977** - The musical begins previews in the Eisenhower Theatre at the Kennedy Center in Washington. It is being reworked almost constantly at this stage, and many things seen here never make it to Broadway.

16. **March 5, 1977** - The official opening night of Annie's pre-Broadway tryout at the Kennedy Center. The show was so instantly popular that ticket orders blew out the box office's phone lines, and the cast performed for President Carter at the White House.
17. **April 6, 1977** - It is now known as the BROADWAY musical Annie, as previews begin at the Alvin Theatre in New York. The show is now in the form of what we know and love today.
18. **April 21, 1977** - Opening night on Broadway brings rave reviews for the show and its performers. It becomes an instant smash hit and the hottest ticket in town.
19. **June 5, 1977** - The accolades for the Broadway musical continue as the show wins 7 Tony Awards: Costumes, Scenic Design, Choreography, Actress in a Musical (Dorothy Loudon), Musical Score, Book of a Musical, and Best Musical. Excerpts from the show ("Tomorrow," Orphans "Fully Dressed," and "Easy Street") are performed for the telecast.
20. **December 4, 1977** - "The Annie Christmas Show" is broadcast on NBC-TV. This hour-long special weaves carols and showtunes into a story of the original cast planning their Christmas party. Excerpts from the actual show are also performed.
21. **March 23, 1978** - The 1st National Company of Annie opens in Toronto, Ontario. This company toured mainly the Eastern half of the U.S for two and a half years.
22. **May 3, 1978** - The show opens in London, also to rave reviews. Andrea McArdle plays Annie for the first month and then retires from the role. The London cast records a cast album, which has "Hard-Knock Life" at a much faster tempo than on the Broadway album.
23. **June 21, 1978** - The 2nd National Company of Annie opens in San Francisco. This company toured mostly the Western U.S. for over three years.
24. **August 5, 1978** - The musical opens in Japan. The Japanese took to Annie very enthusiastically and still perform the show almost yearly there.
25. **October 25, 1978** - The musical opens in Australia. It is a hit there also, and there is a cast album made, which has the distinction of presenting the "I Don't Need Anything But You/Annie" sequence as it is done in the show, rather than as two separate songs as on the Broadway album.
26. **October 3, 1979** - The 3rd National Company of Annie opens in Dallas. This marks the first time in theater history that a show has had four companies (Broadway, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd National) playing in the United States at the same time. This company toured the Midwest for three years.
27. **September 11, 1981** - Just as the 1st National is closing, the 4th National company of Annie opens in West Point, New York. This tour was known as the "bus and truck" company and performed all over for two years.
28. **October 29, 1982** - A dark day for Annie musical fans, as the New York Times carries a notice that the Broadway show will close soon due to faltering ticket sales. The success of the road companies permeating the country and the competition from the movie version are blamed for the decision.

29. January 2, 1983 - The 2,377th and incredible final performance of Annie on Broadway is a time for tears both onstage and in the audience, and a media event with front-page newspaper coverage. The plan for Annie 2 is announced at the curtain call (see AP #1, January 1983, for a more detailed report of this day).
30. April 22, 1974 - For the first time in the history of comic strips, the Tribune Company Syndicate begins reprinting Harold Gray strips from 1936, making LOA the first comic strip ever to go into reruns. This move proves popular, as people respond favorably to the classic storytelling of Gray over the work of the other artists who had tried doing the strip.
31. December 3, 1979 - Leonard Starr takes over the LOA comic strip by drawing six "transitional" strips to take readers out of the Harold Gray story that was being rerun at the time and bring the action up to the present day.
32. December 9, 1979 - Leonard Starr's Annie comic strip officially begins, and the stories are as relevant to issues of the present time as Harold Gray's were. Today, boosted by the popularity of the Broadway show and the movie, the strip remains in many newspapers nationwide.
33. January 14, 1981 - A champagne and Ovaltine (!) nationwide press conference in Hollywood has director John Huston introducing the new motion picture Annie, calling her "Eye-leen" Quinn. Nevertheless, the planned promotion and merchandising for the movie version of the Broadway show promise to make 1982 "the year of Annie," says Columbia Pictures.
34. April 29, 1981 - The movie begins principal filming in New York City. Much of the movie was filmed on location in New Jersey at the Monmouth County College administration building which was used as the Warbucks mansion.
35. September 4, 1981 - The movie completes principal filming in California, on the specially built "Annie Street." A few scenes were re-shot in November 1981, however, including the very beginning of the movie.
36. May 21, 1982 - The motion picture Annie opens in gala premieres in New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto. However, the reviews are somewhat mixed. It is released to large theaters only at this time, and some of them have a large selection of souvenirs for sale in their lobbies.
37. June 18, 1982 - After numerous theater benefit showings by local PBS-TV stations the previous night, the movie now goes into "general release" to theaters all over the country. It plays throughout the summer nationally, some places as late as November. The videocassette comes out in December.
38. January 21, 1984 - The movie debuts on the HBO cable channel. The multi-million dollar TV deals that were made are part of the eventual financial "breaking even" of the movie.
39. February 24, 1986 - The movie debuts on NBC network TV, but in a severely edited form that cuts out major musical numbers like "Easy Street." The movie has been broadcast on NBC four times to date, still always edited.
40. July 24, 1984 - The 1984 National Tour opens in Atlanta. This tour criss-crossed the country but closed after only two months on the road.
41. January 3, 1986 - The 1986 National Tour opens in Rochester, New York. This tour also played dates all across the country and lasted six months.

(continued on page 6)

# The New 'Annie 2' Seeks Well-Heeled Friends

By MERVYN ROTHSTEIN

The bar was open, the drinks were served and the crap game was about to begin. The stakes were higher than a sidewalk game's: potentially \$4.5 million. But what was at stake was whether bets would be placed on what almost everyone in the theater agrees is usually a roll of the dice: whether a musical will come up 7 or 11, or snake eyes.

It is called a backers' audition, where potential investors are invited to see excerpts from a show in the hope that they will be impressed enough to ante up. It has happened thousands of times in the history of Broadway, but this time there was a twist. The Broadway musical was "Annie 2," the sequel to the 1977 megahit "Annie." Yes, the same "Annie 2" that was budgeted at \$7 million, flopped in Washington in January 1990 amid a whirlwind of publicity and never made it to Broadway.

But now the show's producers say they are offering a "new, improved and thoroughly delightful 'Annie 2.'" And so half a hundred people climbed two steep flights of stairs Monday evening to sit in a long, narrow room at the Coffeehouse Club on West 45th Street and watch a handful of Broadway producers, composers, authors and performers show and tell them why, in a time of war and recession, they should invest their money.

"I believe in this show," said Roger Berlind, one of its producers, standing in a corner of the room as the potential sources of money arrived, and drinks and hors d'oeuvres were served. "This is a happy, upbeat family show. The other," he said, referring to the first "Annie 2," "for whatever reason, was conceived as the reverse of 'Annie.' It was hard edged and had dark moments. It was not what the audience wanted. When they came to something called 'Annie 2,' they wanted fun. I think this version delivers it."

Thomas Meehan, who wrote the book for the original "Annie" as well as for "Annie 2," was also optimistic. Producers and creators are, of course, almost always publicly optimistic.

"I honestly, deep down, think we've got it right," Mr. Meehan said, standing by the piano as the show's composer, Charles Strouse, whose Broadway credits include "Bye Bye Birdie" and "Applause" as well as the original "Annie," played selections from the latest version.

"Up to this point, I think we've solved 90 percent of the problems," Mr. Meehan said. "The first time, we wrote the wrong show. Now I think we've written the right show. It's the story of a child looking for parents. In 'Annie,' she finds a father. In 'Annie 2,' she finds a mother."



Ruby Washington/The New York Times

"Annie 2," the sequel to the 1977 hit musical, auditioned for potential backers yesterday. Harve Presnell as Daddy Warbucks and Lauren Gaffney as the new Annie performed a song from the show.

Martin Charnin, the lyricist and director of both "Annie" and "Annie 2," stood at the side of the bar and noted that the audience consisted of "the usual suspects."

### Profiling an Angel

Most of those invited have a track record, or potential track record, as Broadway investors. Among their characteristics are a love of the theater, including the thrill (or agony) of opening night, and lots of spare cash.

"We'll take you through the whole play," Mr. Charnin said, adding that the presentation would last about an hour and 10 minutes and include about a dozen songs. "It's a musical about family. You are invited to respond as if you were in the theater, with laughter and applause."

The show was played on a staircase leading up from the side of the bar, with the characters sometimes at the foot, sometimes in the middle, sometimes at the top. Mr. Charnin narrated, summarizing the plot, leading into bits of dialogue and lots of songs.

Lauren Gaffney, the show's new Annie, sang and danced and led around her loyal dog, Sandy, portrayed by Chelsea. Harve Presnell recreated his Washington role as Oliver Warbucks, Annie's billionaire father, and Raymond Thorne did the same as Franklin D. Roosevelt. Other cast members included two sprightly youngsters, Lisa Molina and Natalia Harris, who portrayed singing and dancing orphans.

### The Target: A Fall Opening

There was much applause, and much laughter, and at the end a lot of congratulations. What was not clear was whether the applause and the

laughter and the congratulations would metamorphose into cash.

"We hope to open on Broadway in the fall," said Mr. Berlind, a veteran producer whose recent credits include the last two Tony Award-winning musicals, "Jerome Robbins's Broadway" and "City of Angels," the former a financial flop on Broadway and the latter a financial success. "The budget is \$4.5 million. We have

The show's producers say that this time they got it right.

about \$1.4 million left over from the Washington production, from investors who left their money in. If they still decide to stay, we need about \$3.1 million more."

The original "Annie" ran on Broadway for almost 6 years, a total of 2,377 performances. It cost \$800,000 and made a profit of \$20 million, including a \$9.5 million movie sale. When "Annie 2" was officially announced in mid-1989, and all during its rehearsal period in New York, its creators, producers and investors envisioned a similarly happy fate.

But nothing worked. When it opened in Washington, the critics lambasted it. Changes were made: new material was added, and so were new orphans. But it was not enough. The producers decided to save whatever of the \$7 million that was left and not go to New York. Instead, they

said, they would work on the show from May to July in Chester, Conn., at the Norma Terris Theater of the Goodspeed Opera House and refinance it for another Broadway try. The original "Annie," they noted, had begun at the Goodspeed.

#### Demise of an Archenemy

And so they did. New songs were composed. The book was rewritten, so much so that Annie's archenemy, Miss Hannigan (played in Washington, as in the original production, by Dorothy Loudon), was eventually eliminated. Ms. Gaffney was chosen to replace the Washington orphan, Danielle Findley, who had been selected in a much-publicized search.

And now, more than a year after

the Washington debacle, they were back in New York.

Monday was the first of three backers' auditions. The second was held last night, same time, same place, and the third is scheduled for tonight. Among those invited were representatives of the three major Broadway theater owners, who in addition to providing venues can also provide production money. On Monday, Jack Viertel, the creative director of Jujamcyn Theaters, showed up to have a look.

"I first saw the show in Washington," Mr. Viertel said before the presentation began, "and when I saw it again at Goodspeed I thought they had done a lot of good work. These are important artists putting together a

show. The fact that they had difficulty doesn't mean that they can't do it."

#### No Hasty Decision

Mr. Viertel cautioned, though, that backers' auditions could be misleading. "It's easy to convey that the songs are sprightly and that a show has energy," he said. "That can be deceiving. It's sometimes hard to see the soul of a show at a backers' audition. That's why if I have any interest in it at all I want to see a full script and take time to think about it."

Meanwhile, the producers of "Annie 2" will wait while others decide if they will provide aid and comfort to this particular orphan.

"I hope you enjoy it," Mr. Charnin told his guests when the evening began. "And I hope we hear from you."

© New York Times Submitted by David Powers

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42. September 11, 1989 - Open auditions are held in New York to find a girl to play Annie in Annie 2: Miss Hannigan's Revenge. This is a major media event, as it is the first publicity for the upcoming show.
  43. November 6, 1989 - Rehearsals begin for Annie 2: MHR and its pre-Broadway tryout in Washington. The production gets major media coverage throughout the fall and winter.
  44. December 4, 1989 - A special presentation of excerpts from Annie 2: MHR is performed in the Marquis Theatre in New York. Songs performed here would later be cut or changed, despite positive reactions from the audience in attendance.
  45. December 22, 1989 - The eagerly anticipated first preview of Annie 2: Miss Hannigan's Revenge is performed to a full house in the Opera House at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.
  46. January 4, 1990 - Annie 2: MHR officially opens at the Kennedy Center to negative reviews. Changes in book and score are made daily to improve the show. The negative reactions also receive media attention.
  47. January 20, 1990 - Despite all the revisions, Annie 2: MHR closes on this date in Washington, cancelling the plans to bring the show to Broadway. The reaction of the critics and the audiences cause the endeavor to be entirely re-planned.
  48. May 17, 1990 - The new, rewritten Annie 2 opens at Goodspeed-At-Chester, Connecticut. In this more informal workshop setting, the daily changes and rewrites continue for eight weeks. Some elements of Annie 2: MHR are dropped entirely, while others are modified.
  49. July 8, 1990 - Annie 2 ends its run at Goodspeed. Although the show is not officially reviewed, the audience reaction is much more favorable. The show does well at the box office also. It is announced that work on the show will continue in the hope of an eventual Broadway opening.
  50. January 31, 1983 - Last but not least, on this date the very first issue of Annie People was mailed out to about 25 fans. The four-page newsletter soon grew to eight pages, added more photos and reprints, and now our subscription list currently includes almost 200 fans, performers, and creative personnel. With your continued loyal support of AP (and of LOA in general), we hope to be bringing you at least 50 more issues!





Submitted by John Tonner

LOUISVILLE, KY - Top row, Whitney Boyles, Conny Smith, Maggie Lawson; bottom row, Jennifer Fehder, Ashley Mueller (Annie), Emily Moore



Submitted by John Tonner

LOUISVILLE, KY - Top row, Brandie Gray, Conny Smith, Alicia Corcoran; bottom row, Jennifer Fehder, Emily Moore, Maggie Lawson (Annie)



Submitted by John Tonner

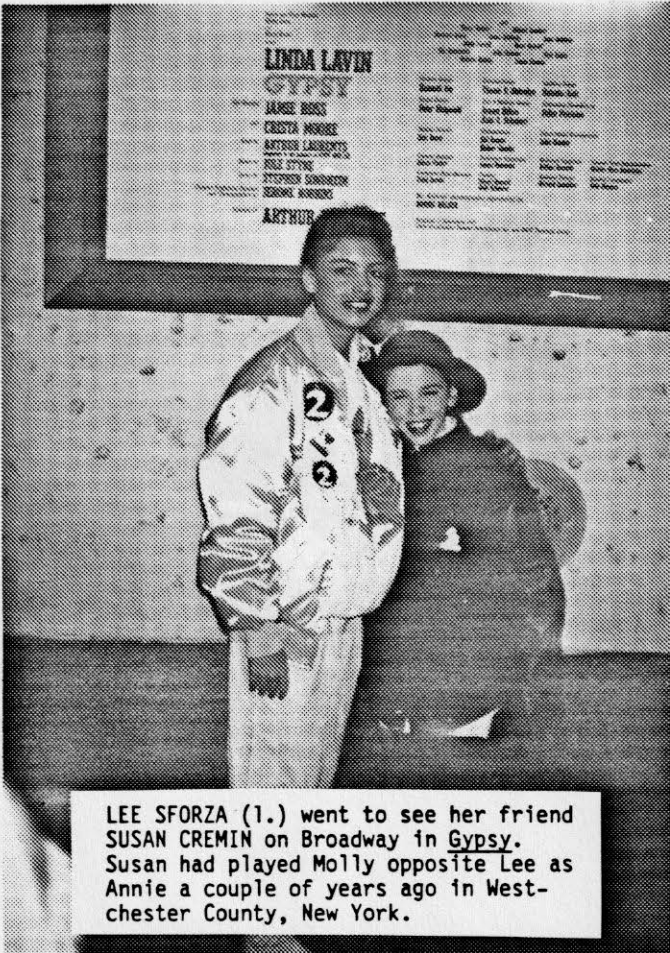
LOUISVILLE, KY - Christina Gritton, Brandie Gray (Annie), Ashley Mueller, Abby Lovan



Submitted by John Tonner

WYANDOTTE, MI - Top row, Jessica Rayba, Cindy Sissen, Nikki Dreyer, Sarah Allen; middle row, Mary Brohl, Stacey Swick, Haley Rybicki, Michelle Sissen; bottom row, Meredith Jones (Annie), Tami Walters, Emily Cassel

Submitted by Lee Sforza



LEE SFORZA (1.) went to see her friend SUSAN CREMIN on Broadway in Gypsy. Susan had played Molly opposite Lee as Annie a couple of years ago in Westchester County, New York.

Submit by Carol-Ann Plante



CAROL-ANN PLANTÉ with her hairy co-star Harry on the set of Harry And The Hendersons. Carol-Ann was recently featured in an article in Bop magazine.

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Little Orphan  
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