

Annie People

The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

No. 67, January 1994

Jon Merrill, Editor and Publisher
Tricia Trozzi, Co-Editor

Contents copyright © 1994 for the contributors. *Annie People* is published every other month in January, March, May, July, September, and November at 517 North Fenwick Street, Allentown, PA 18103. Publication has been continuous since January 1983. Member of the National Association of Fan Clubs.



SALUTING THE 100TH ANNIE-VERSARY OF HAROLD GRAY'S BIRTH!



© 1982, Bruce Smith, *The History of Little Orphan Annie*

Harold Gray, the creator of *Little Orphan Annie*, was born on a farm in Kankakee, Illinois on January 20, 1894. He graduated from Purdue University and then went to Chicago to work at the *Chicago Tribune*. The paper, under the editorship of Joseph Patterson and Robert McCormack, was enjoying a lot of success with several comic strips which had originated there, such as *The Gumps*, *Gasoline Alley*, *Winnie Winkle*, and *Moon Mullins*. Young Harold Gray got his feet wet in cartooning as assistant to Sidney Smith, writer and artist of *The Gumps*.

There are many legends about the origins of *Little Orphan Annie*. One such story--never verified by Gray himself but widely accepted as fact--is that the name came from a poem by James Whitcomb Riley as part of a collection that very likely may have been read by Gray as a child in the Midwest, since Riley was from Indiana. This poem was written in 1885 and called "Little Orphant Annie." (The word "Orphant" may have been an earlier spelling and pronunciation of the word "Orphan" a century ago, or could have merely been a dialectical spelling of the adjective "orphaned.") Another story widely known is that Gray drew some sample strips of an orphan boy named Little Orphan Otto and showed them to Joseph Patterson who remarked that Gray's depiction of Otto looked too girlish, so he said, "Put a skirt on him and we'll call it *Little Orphan Annie*." A third legend is that Gray himself met a real child on the streets of Chicago who impressed him with her street smarts, and her name was Annie. Since there were a number of strips about boys and almost none about a little girl, he decided to use her name in a strip idea he had about an orphan.

We do not know exactly what Annie's origins are, since Gray died in May 1968 at age 74 without revealing the true story; However, it could be a combination of several tales. What we do know is that Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie* made her debut appearance in the *New York News* (a satellite paper of the *Chicago Tribune* and run by the same editors) on Monday, August 5, 1924, almost 70 years ago. Annie was in the Orphanage run by Miss Asthma and was being told that people would be coming to see if they wanted to adopt her. Soon a Mrs. Warbucks took her home "on trial," but it was soon evident that Mrs. Warbucks wanted a child merely to make herself look good to her society friends. Fortunately, for Annie, Mrs. Warbucks' husband came home from one of his business trips after a few weeks and took a liking to the child. The first appearance of Oliver Warbucks thus was an important landmark in the history of the strip.

Followers of the currently running musical *Annie Warbucks* may be interested to learn there actually WAS a Mrs. Warbucks; moreover, she even preceded "Daddy" Warbucks in the strip. However, she mysteriously disappeared during a yachting trip not long after and was never heard from again.

"Daddy" married a second time; this time it was to the infamous Trixie in 1932; she too vanished from the strip, never to return. From that point on in the strip, "Daddy" remained a bachelor.

The first Sunday full-page color strip appeared in November 1924. For several years the Sunday strips had little to do with the daily strip; however, by 1931 or so, they were interconnected. Gray did them in such a way so that readers of the daily strip only, or readers of the Sunday strip only, could still follow the story. Some of the stories went on for as much as a year.

Sandy entered the Harold Gray comic strip in early 1925 as a small puppy. Unlike Annie herself, Sandy was allowed to grow up throughout the course of the strip and become the large dog he is known as today. Annie, of course, has remained locked in at about 11 years old to this day (although in the very earliest Gray strips, she looks considerably smaller).

An interesting observation was made at one time regarding the mystery surrounding Annie's true age. The strip of February 29, 1964 showed Annie having a birthday party. Since one born on the 29th of February has a birthday only every four years, that would mean that if Annie turned 11

that day, that would make her birthdate February 29, 1920, possibly around the time that Gray may have been first thinking about a comic strip about a girl orphan.

Punjab and the Asp, "Daddy" Warbucks' bodyguards from India and the Orient, respectively, made their debut in the comic strip in the mid 1930s. When the Annie movie came out in 1982, many who were unfamiliar with the old comic strip wondered who these two characters were and why they were put into the movie when they hadn't been in the stage musical. Actually, it wasn't that Punjab and the Asp were "added" to the movie, it was that they were taken out of the stage musical because creator Martin Charnin wanted to get away from the cartoon aspect of Little Orphan Annie and make the characters seem more real, and therefore the superhuman and supernatural aspects of them seemed out of place. But the movie producer Ray Stark wanted to make the movie a little more like the old Harold Gray strip was, with its chases and death-defying situations (e.g., Annie hanging on the bridge at the end), so it seemed logical to include Punjab and the Asp too. (Note: Both of them were on stage during the very first few iterations of *Annie 2: Miss Hannigan's Revenge*, but they were soon cut.)

Harold Gray's strip pretty much kept the same formulas and enjoyed immense popularity all over the country. Annie got in all sorts of scrapes both with and without "Daddy" present and had to use her wits to escape. The settings were in whatever was going on at the time, be it the Depression, World War II, the Cold War, etc. And, there were lots of political overtones all the way through, depicting Gray's own feelings and opinions about world situations. All this helped Little Orphan Annie become one of the most popular and longest-lasting comic strips in history, spawning a decade-long radio show, three movies and two stage musicals. Harold Gray kept doing the strip right up until his death in 1968, and to him we dedicate this issue of *Annie People*, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Facts about Harold Gray's Little Orphan Annie

Because the editors of the Chicago Tribune were displeased with the fact that Annie had been taken in by Oliver Warbucks and therefore made into a "rich" orphan, the paper cancelled LOA in October 1925. Response from its readers that day was so immediate and powerful that a front-page apology appeared the next day, along with two strips--the current one and the one omitted the previous day.

Early on, during one of "Daddy's" long trips, Annie was staying with a Mrs. Pewter. Mrs. Pewter made a red dress for Annie, and that trademark outfit became the standard forever.

In 1933, during a sequence when Sandy was lost, a telegram arrived at the *Tribune* from Henry Ford, urging that Annie find Sandy as soon as possible.

Gray disliked the programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt intensely, which showed often in his writing. He angered many people along the way who thought that a comic strip was no place for such editorializing.

In 1942, when Annie and her friends started the Junior Commandos to help find scrap metal for the war effort, the story inspired kids in real life to do the same, and real live Junior Commando groups sprang up all over the country.

In 1944, Gray was so upset when the Democratic Party nominated FDR for a fourth term as President that he decided to kill off Warbucks. This sequence was drawn out for an entire summer, and the maudling nature of the daily events leading up to the death caused readers all over the U.S. to weep at their breakfast tables. FDR was re-elected to a fourth term but died in spring 1945. And so, Gray brought Warbucks back from the dead in a sequence about how

Warbucks had faked his own death to outwit his enemies and was now back--just in time to get Annie out of jail and clear her of a trumped-up murder charge.

In the late '40s, Gray experimented briefly with small eyeballs for Annie in her traditionally blank pupils. Readers were not pleased, however, and he dropped the idea for a long time. Toward the end of his life in the late '60s, however, eyeballs returned. The eyeballs on his final Christmas card (elsewhere in this issue) were quite large and prominent.

After Gray died in 1968, several other artists tried to keep LOA going, but they were not successful. And so, in 1974, the papers began to reprint old Gray strips from the 1930s and 1940s. This was the first and only time that this had been done in comic strip history. Finally, in 1979 Leonard Starr began doing the strip, as he continues to do today. Just before Starr's strip began, he drew a week of transitional strips to bring us from the Gray reprint into his brand-new strip. Therefore, the sequence of LOA has been absolutely continuous for seven decades.



© 1982, Bruce Smith, The History of Little Orphan Annie

HISTORIC MOMENT: Annie and "Daddy" meet in Gray's strip for the first time
September 27, 1924

LITTLE ORPHANT ANNIE

By JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

LITTLE Orphant Annie's come to our house to stay,
 An' wash the cups an' saucers up, an' brush the crumbs
 away,
 An' shoo the chickens off the porch, an' dust the hearth, an'
 sweep,
 An' make the fire, an' bake the bread, an' earn her board-an'
 keep;
 An' all us other childern, when the supper-things is done,
 We set around the kitchen fire an' has the mostest fun
 A-list'nin' to the witch-tales 'at Annie tells about,
 An' the Gobble-uns 'at gits you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out!

Wunst they wuz a little boy wouldn't say his prayers,—
 An' when he went to bed at night, away up-stairs,
 His Mammy heerd him holler, an' his Daddy heerd him
 bawl,
 An' when they turn't the kivers down, he wuzn't there at all!
 An' they seeked him in the rafter-room, an' cubby-hole, an'
 press,
 An' seeked him up the chimby-flue, an' ever'wheres, I guess;
 But all they ever found wuz thist his pants an' roundabout:—
 An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out!

An' one time a little girl 'ud allus laugh an' grin,
 An' make fun of ever' one, an' all her blood an' kin;
 An' wunst, when they was "company," an' ole folks wuz there,
 She mocked 'em an' 'shocked 'em, an' said she didn't care!
 An' thist as she kicked her heels, an' turn't to run an' hide,
 They wuz two great big Black Things a-standin' by her side,
 An' they snatched her through the ceilin' 'fore she knowed
 what she's about!

An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out!

An' little Orphant Annie says when the blaze is blue,
 An' the lamp-wick sputters, an' the wind goes woo-oo-oo!
 An' you hear the crickets quit, an' the moon is gray,
 An' the lightnin'-bugs in dew is all squenched away,—
 You better mind yer parunts an' yer teachers fond an' dear,
 An' 'churish them 'at loves you, an' 'dry the orphant's tear,
 An' 'he'p the pore an' needy ones 'at clusters all about,
 Er the Gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out!

Copyright, 1885, 1890, 1913, 1918, James Whitcomb Riley



Harold Gray at work on Annie

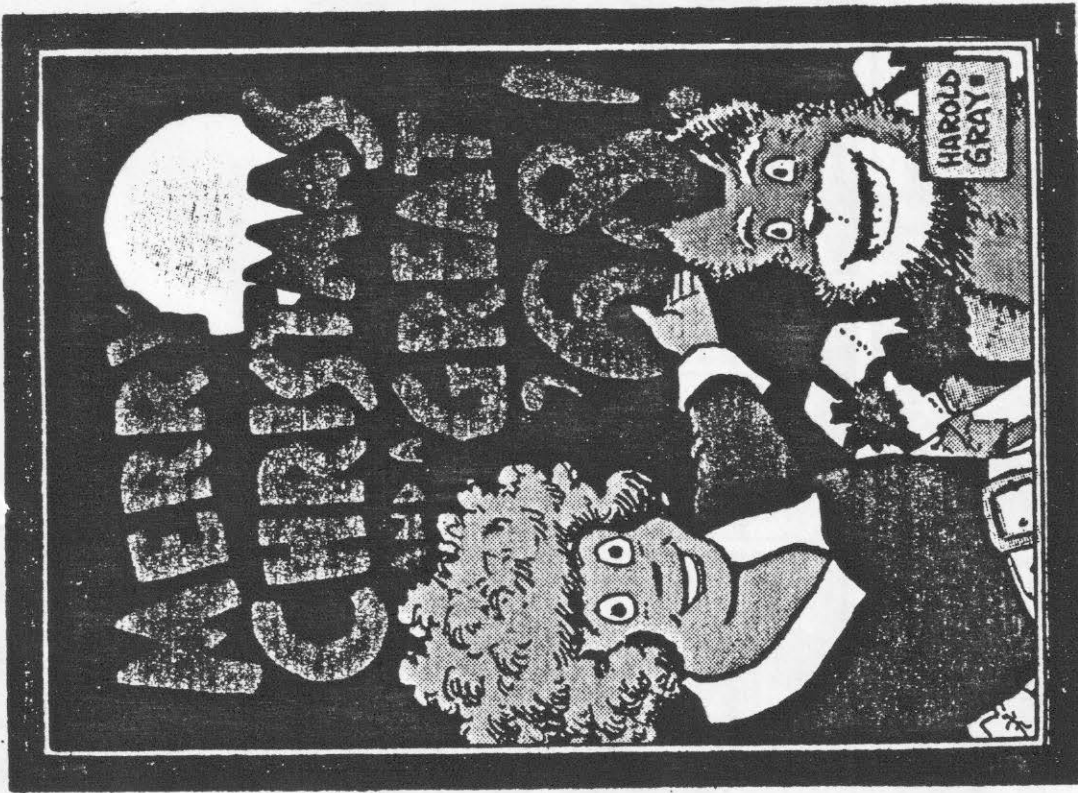
**Leapin' Lizards!
 Little Orphan Annie
 Had a Sex Change**

One of the most popular comic strip characters of all time is Little Orphan Annie, who had one adventure that few of her fans are aware of: She started out as a boy.

In 1924, Harold Gray, then an assistant cartoonist, submitted a comic strip—with a little boy as its hero—to the New York *Daily News*. Joseph M. Patterson, publisher of the paper, advised Gray to "put skirts on the kid and call her Little Orphan Annie." The name came from a poem by James Whitcomb Riley. Gray accepted the sex change idea, since the character would be in a league of her own—40 other strips featured boys as protagonists.

Annie made her debut on Aug. 5, 1924, along with five other comics. They were failures—but not Annie. This tough, frizzy-haired tyke has survived constant peril from gangsters, kidnapers and Russian spies, undaunted by the lack of pupils in her eyes and by the fact that she hasn't aged—or changed her clothes—in 59 years. Reprints of Gray's strips are still being run 15 years after his death, and Annie has become a star of the stage and screen.

—*Idea submitted by Bethany Kan-del, New York, N.Y.*



CHRISTMAS CARD: Every year Gray drew Annie and Sandy (and sometimes other characters from LOA too) into his and his wife's annual Christmas card. These cards are widely sought after by Orphan Annie collectors. This one was the 1967 one and was the final card before his death in May '68. Note that by this time Gray had started using rather large eyeballs.



© 1982, Bruce Smith, The History of Little Orphan Annie

Harold Gray's first LOA Sunday comic strip, November 1924

ANNIE WARBUCKS ORIGINAL CAST ALBUM IS OUT!

Late 1993 saw the release of the much-awaited *Annie Warbucks* original cast album. It is available in three different formats: compact disc with the comic book insert, cassette with the insert, and cassette without the insert. (If you have already bought the cassette without the comic book, you can write to the address inside and they will send you one.)

The album was recorded on three days in October and released just before Thanksgiving. It is beautifully recorded, and the cast seemed happy with the quality of the recording, which was done by Angel Records. This album is different from the original *Annie* cast record in that there is a great deal of dialogue included, giving the listener some of the story line. This dialogue is not identical to the play script; in some instances it has been changed for brevity or a line has been given to a different character from the one who delivers it on stage.

More on the comic book insert: It was a special project by current Little Orphan Annie comic strip creator Leonard Starr. He drew 25 different panels, each one depicting either a song in the score or an important plot sequence. These are excellently done, and are a perfect accessory to the album. The rest of the insert is a plot synopsis of *Annie Warbucks* plus a complete set of lyrics for what is on the album. The 50-page booklet is so large that the compact disc has a double box to accommodate it.

Another interesting thing to note is that on the comic insert as well as the outside box Sandy's muzzle is white. This is of course correct and the way Leonard Starr has always drawn him. All the other *Annie Warbucks* materials--T-shirts, posters, color Playbill, etc.--show him incorrectly with a completely brown face.

One important difference listeners who have been to the show will notice: At the show a small combo is used for the music, but on the album a full orchestra is used. This was a fine idea and adds greatly to the overall sound of the cast album.

The entire cast was used with one notable exception: Cindy Lou (sometimes spelled Cindy Lu) is not present on the album. "But I hear barking!" I hear you cry. Yes, you do indeed. But here is what happened: When everyone arrived at the recording studio, there was a dispute about appropriate salary regarding the use of the dog on the album, and the end result was that Bill Berloni ended up leaving the premises with Cindy Lou. So here they were, ready to record, and no Sandy. And so, all the "Arf"s were done anyway at the session, but they were all done by director Martin Charnin! Go back and listen to the barks again, now that you know they were made by a human, not a dog!

Aside from that fairly critical problem, the recording went off just fine, and it was released on schedule.

Here are some things we noticed about the album, especially differences between it and the actual show: The Overture on the album is longer than it is in the show, probably because a full orchestra was used. They gave Grace a solo line in "Annie Ain't Just Annie Anymore" which Marguerite MacIntyre does not have in the show. (Of course, some of these devices might have been tried in the show during rehearsals and then changed to the present way currently seen on stage.) Several theater critics complained about the choreography done by the Orphans during "The Other Woman"--quite possibly they might enjoy the song more hearing it on the album. The opposite seems true with "That's The Kind Of Woman"; what is happening on stage is particularly interesting, leaving just the song on the album with something a little bit missing, since the song is so "visual." Although the bit with the lawyer's being part of the sinister plot is in the synopsis in the booklet, it is not part of the album dialogue. The "Leave It To The Girls" song is missing a verse on the album that is used on stage. This was done perhaps because this song, too, is very "visual" and means more when it is actually seen. At the wedding scene FDR mentions that it is taking place on the 42nd floor of the Waldorf, which is not mentioned in the script.

A marvelous device used on the album is the use of the train noises fading out after the song "I Got Me" ends, marking what is the end of the first act in the play. I've heard listeners say that "gave them chills" when they heard it because it was so realistic and dramatic.

I personally think that the two best musical numbers in *Annie Warbucks* are the first two in the second act, namely "Love" and "Somebody's Gotta Do Somethin'." I was certainly not disappointed when I heard the album, as I thought they came out particularly well. I was especially glad that the short "Love" reprise with Annie and C. G. Paterson was included. I asked Jackie Angelescu about the "Wanna see my frog?" line at the end of the song, and she told me that at one time she had that line on the stage but it was removed by the time the show opened.

Another instance of a line being given to another actor was that in the show the Senator delivers the line about "calling that thing the TVA" but on the album the President delivers it. The dance interlude during "All Dolled Up" is so marvelous on stage, but I could see why it was omitted from the album, since, again in this case, it is something largely "visual."

Listen carefully to the announcement that the buffet is about to begin. Mrs. Doyle says very softly "About time!" which I thought was especially funny, and I don't think it is done in the play, at least I didn't hear it from where I was sitting.

Toward the end, after maintaining the illusion of actually occurring events, it suddenly becomes Annie narrating the plot to Sandy (discovering the crooks, plus the actual wedding). This takes away a little from the realism of the story, but at least some of the actual actors' lines were added (even Mrs. Doyle's "Jail" remark). This device seems somewhat jarring, since up till this time the scenes are well defined, and all of a sudden we change to a narration.

The album ends with what they call the *Finale Ultimo*--the curtain call, which is a reprise of "When You Smile." At the first preview of opening night last July, this was the ONLY time the song was heard, as the creators still had not thought of a place in the play to put it. (Has anyone tried to count the number of different scenes that song has been in since December 1989??) Now it is in the show, but the curtain call version is still being done. "THE END" on the album is something else that was done on stage early on but later cut. Again here, we are suddenly jarred into the idea of a story being told rather than a story happening at the time.

All in all, this cast album is a special treat and should not be missed by any Annie fans. It further emphasizes all the work that has gone on for more than four years in getting this show up through all its different iterations (probably "A Younger Man" is perhaps the ONLY example of a song performed at the opening night of *Annie 2: Miss Hannigan's Revenge* in '89 in Washington that is virtually unchanged today).

Bet your bottom dollar...
tomorrow is today.

GET THE ORIGINAL CAST RECORDING — NOW AVAILABLE ON ANGEL RECORDS. They're back! Daddy Warbucks, Miss Farrell, Sandy and, of course, Annie Warbucks—in a brand new adventure that picks up where the original left off. *Annie Warbucks* is not only a smash hit musical, but also an original cast recording available on CD or cassette, so you and your whole family can enjoy its toe-tapping tunes and spirit-lifting songs anytime. And the album comes with



liner notes in the form of a collectible comic book, so you can follow the story while you listen.

Annie Warbucks brings together again the characters that made the original so unforgettable. The star, of course, is the new Annie—Kathryn Zaremba, a tiny 10-year-old who *The New York Times* called "a giant in the talent department...Ethel Merman at this age could have scarcely possessed a bigger voice." The rest of the cast has 'em raving,

"DADDY!"



too...Harve Presnell, reprising his role as Daddy Warbucks, "possesses an astonishingly expressive baritone," says *The New Yorker*. And Donna McKechnie, star of the original *A Chorus Line*, "returns to the stage with the blithe exuberance of a genie who's been trapped in a bottle."

Annie and Daddy's Christmas party is interrupted by bad news. Annie will be sent back to the orphanage if Daddy doesn't get a wife within 60 days. Daddy is almost snared by a fortune hunter, and Annie runs away to Tennessee with Sandy. Will Annie be reunited with Daddy? Will he marry the good woman who has loved

him all along? Discover the happy conclusion for yourself—get *Annie Warbucks* on CD or cassette—today.

Annie Warbucks is great fun for every member of your family—and makes a charming gift for the holidays, too.



Annie Warbucks
AT LONG LAST—
THE MUSIC TO
THE SEQUEL



Call 1-800-888-8574
to order. It only takes a moment to bring Annie home.

Jon Merrill
517 North Fenwick Street
Allentown, PA 18103

CompuServe 73677,135
Prodigy GRHD27A

Little Orphan
Annie