

Christmas Excerpts from Adelaide Prouty's Diaries

Christmas 1861

In 1861 Adelaide and Phineas Prouty had been married for six years and had 2 children, Millie, age 5 and Allie, age 3. Mrs. Prouty was pregnant with her third child, Hattie, who would be born in March 1862. The Civil War had started in April and people throughout the northern and southern states were worried about the future, but still celebrated Christmas.

1861

Monday, December 9

Millie is nearly frantic with anticipation. She faithfully believes in Santa Claus, & his coming thro' the chimney hole-& the chief play now-a-days with Allie & herself is playing it was Christmas Eve, hanging up stockings &c. Allie's idea of it all is quite an intelligent one, & she enlists into the game with her usual energy.

Saturday, December 21

I've been shopping a little today for Christmas—but purses are lean this year—What with War, & household expenses we have all we can do comfortably.

Tuesday, December 24

Millie is wild with expectation & her whole theme is "Santa-Claus"- We brightened up the parlor with a few evergreens & artificial flowers that captivated the children, & to night the crowning glory was to hang up the stockings on my bureau knobs. Papa's sock was hung up & my own with its capacious leg was fastened to the door handle. Alex, Gus [Phineas' sister Sarah Augusta and her husband Alexander Chew], Father Mother & all had a little oyster supper at night. About ten who should appear but Millie her eyes like great pennies, peering over the bed clothes to see if St. Nick had been at the stockings—& lo! they were stuffed full & treasures heaped on the carpet below. She grew so excited it was long before we could quiet her & all get asleep again.

Christmas

Bright & early they were up—& all the bright anticipations realized. Allie was happy with her new doll & cart & Millie in her lovely wax doll & books. Dear little children—they'll never know in afterlife such keen enjoyment & unclouded happiness.

Christmas 1890

By 1890, the Prouty household had seen many changes, but Christmas was still an exciting holiday. Millie and Allie had grown up, gotten married and moved away. Hattie had died in 1884 at the age of 22 from illness. A daughter named Grace had been born in 1867 and died while still a little baby. Another daughter, Anna, (whose nickname was Granty for the Civil War General and President Ulysses S. Grant) was born in 1864 and still lived at home in 1890. The youngest child and only boy in the family was Phineas III, or Phinny, who was born in 1875 and was 15 years old in 1890.

1890

Thursday, December 11

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The days fly by unmarked by any events—Phin at school and Granty busy on her Christmas gifts.

Saturday, December 13
went shopping with Granty for Xmas.

Tuesday, December 16
Phin studying for Xmas play.

Friday, December 19
Phin, Granty & I doing our Christmas shopping

Tuesday, December 23
Shopping daily—Granty wildly excited over her numerous presents to make all ready without great expense.

Wednesday, December 24
Busy shopping & getting last things together for tomorrow.

Thursday, December 25
If Christmas Day on Thursday be
A windy winter you shall see;
Windy weather in each week,
And hard tempests strong and thick.
The summer shall be good and dry;
Corn and beasts shall multiply;
That year is good lands for to till.
[newspaper clipping]

Pat [Granty's beau (boyfriend)] arrived at breakfast—Afterwards we opened our stockings. Phin enchanted with his watch-his scarf pins and books—Granty delighted with her "things"—all more than satisfied. Papa's clock and silk blanket very acceptable.