

Santa to the Rescue

What Really Happened December 1822

By

W. Steve Wilson

(With a respectful nod to Clement C. Moore)



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The Declassified Text

In researching the history of the famous Christmas poem, *A Visit from St. Nicholas*, by Clement C. Moore, I had the occasion to access the archives of the Library of Congress. I was looking for a digital copy of the original manuscript, handwritten by the author. What I found was, to put it mildly—unexpected. Without fanfare or announcement, and after 200 years of keeping the documents secret, the correspondence between the War Department and Mr. Moore from late 1822 had been declassified and made available to anyone who could locate the files.

The records revealed a series of unexplained astronomical phenomena occurring from late November through December, affecting the area around Newport, RI. The most notable of the phenomena was a large object passing between the Sun and the Earth. Several amateur astronomers detected the object and reported it to the government. The War Department attributed the sightings to an “echo” of the transit of the planet Venus, which occurred on December 6, 1822.

The strange phenomena continued until the War Department stepped in and addressed the situation. The documents detailing the preparations, the deployment of troops, the resulting confrontation, and the intervention of a third-party military force that saved the day were deemed classified. To avoid public hysteria, the War Department contracted with Clement C. Moore to write and publish a fictional work that would at once entertain the public, obfuscate the actual narrative, and hopefully relegate the incident to the stuff of legend and myth.

I would suggest their efforts were effective. Until the papers were declassified and discovered, nobody had a clue as to what had happened.

Below I present the truth of the events that took place on Christmas Eve, 1822.



Santa to the Rescue

What We Were Told	What Really Happened
<p>'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse; The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;</p> <p>The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads; And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap, Had just settled down for a long winter's nap,</p> <p>When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window I flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.</p> <p>The moon on the breast of the new- fallen snow Gave the luster of mid-day to objects below,</p>	<p>'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the towns The troops were all mustered, no smiles, just frowns. Their flintlocks were loaded, extra powder at hand Hoping they'd survive through the night, to a man</p> <p>The children were nestled, all hidden away, While mothers and grandmas held terror at bay. And the older young boys, too young for this fight, Stood next to their fathers to load muskets all night</p> <p>When out on the field came a roar and a rush The scouts were dispatched as steam rose from the slush Away to the hideout, they took up their post Peered through the spyglass, the position did boast</p> <p>The light from the object flashed bright on the snow The yellowish gleam cast shadows below,</p>

What We Were Told	What Really Happened
<p>When, what to my wondering eyes should appear, But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,</p> <p>With a little old driver, so lively and quick, I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick. More rapid than eagles his coursers they came, And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;</p> <p>"Now, DASHER! now, DANCER! now, PRANCER and VIXEN! On, COMET! on CUPID! on, DONNER and BLITZEN! To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall! Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"</p> <p>As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly, When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky, So up to the house-top the coursers they flew, With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.</p> <p>And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof The prancing and pawing of each little</p>	<p>The scouts reported a sight our force might just fear, A rocket-powered sleigh and eight armored reindeer</p> <p>The driver all clad in red plating and spikes Against which we'd have not a chance with lead balls and short pikes The craft did descend more rapid than hail And a voice shouted out over the rocket's hot gale,</p> <p>"Now, DASHER! now, DANCER! now, PRANCER and VIXEN! On, COMET! on CUPID! on, DONNER and BLITZEN! Disperse to the flanks; take up your positions Cast the shield wide, repel their munitions."</p> <p>The reindeer sped to surround our division They threw up a shield to protect our contingent With each of the eight, a platoon did connect And we all learned right then they were here to protect</p> <p>With a flash of bright light, we had our clear proof</p>

What We Were Told	What Really Happened
<p>hoof. As I drew in my hand, and was turning around, Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.</p>	<p>The reindeer were soldiers from antler to hoof. Their leader came down on a column of flame “My name is St. Nicholas,” we heard him exclaim.</p>
<p>He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot, And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot; A bundle of toys he had flung on his back, And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.</p>	<p>His red, spikey clothes boasted a pack on his back He rose from his sleigh on a rocket of black From the pack on his back, he deployed a device And fired a bolt at the heavens, first once and then twice</p>
<p>His eyes -- how they twinkled! his dimples how merry! His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry! His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow, And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;</p>	<p>The mask on his face did shield his expression But his white flowing beard was trimmed with precision. His red hat adorned with a white furry tassel, He got right to work without much of a hassle.</p>
<p>The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth, And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath; He had a broad face and a little round belly, That shook, when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly.</p>	<p>He held in his hands two odd-looking weapons He aimed them and fired them straight to the heavens Two strong beams of light shot to the skies A wind sizzled hot, the flash blinding our eyes</p>
<p>He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,</p>	<p>A bloated black object flew in from the west</p>

What We Were Told	What Really Happened
<p>And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself; A wink of his eye and a twist of his head, Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;</p> <p>He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work, And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk, And laying his finger aside of his nose, And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;</p> <p>He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, And away they all flew like the down of a thistle. But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD-NIGHT!</p>	<p>We unleashed our muskets; we gave it our best St. Nick gave a cheer and altered his stance With him on our team, we might have a chance.</p> <p>No words were then spoken, and we all went to work We loaded and fired; we fought as berserk. Finally, the black craft came down with a bang And with the enemy gone, to the sleigh, the reindeer all sprang</p> <p>Nick jumped in his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle On a rocket's hot flame, the sleigh flew like a missile But we all heard his shout as he rocketed away The threats been combatted; enjoy Christmas Day</p>

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