

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Mother Goose**

The only true Mother Goose Melodies, an exact reproduction of the text and illustrations of the original edition, is before me as I write.

This edition was published in Boston in 1833 by Monroe and Francis, with illustrations by the Rev. Edward Everett Hale. The original was published in Boston by Lothrop, Lee & Shepard in 1806.

What I want to tell our readers today is of Mother Goose in the 19th Century, the Mother Goose on which the old Boston line was brought up, a line now -nearly forgotten.

The entire baby life of this race was Mother Goose's Melodies in the dear little quarto edition, of which a precise copy is in my hand. It was given to me many years ago by the late Mrs. Reuban Serrano.

Who was Mother Goose and when were her melodies first given to the world? These are questions which have been asked but have never been satisfactorily answered.

Many persons imagine that Mother Goose is a myth, that no such person ever existed. This is a mistake. Mother Goose was not only a person, but she was born and resided for many years in Boston where many of her descendants may now be found.

The last that bore the ancient paternal cognoman died about the year 1807, and was buried in the old Granary burying grounds, where probably lie the remains of the whole brood, if we may judge from the numerous gravestones which mark their resting places.

The family originated in England, but at what time they came to this country is not known, but probably about 1656. They were land holders in Boston as early as 1660, according to Mr. D. Bowditch in his book of names, and were known as "The Wealthy Family of Goose."

The first book of the kind known to be printed in this country bears the title of "Songs for the Nursery; or Mother Goose's Melodies for Children." It was printed by T. Fleet at his printing house, Pudding Lane, 1719. Price: two coppers.

Fleet made his way to Boston in 1712 and shortly thereafter married the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Goose. They were married by the Rev. Cotton Mather on June 8, 1715.

The bride's name was Elizabeth Goose. In due time their family was increased by the birth of a son and heir. Mother Goose, like all good grandmothers, was in ecstasies at the event; her joy was unbounded; she spent her whole time in the nursery and wandering about the house, repeating the songs and ditties which she had learned in her childhood.

Fleet soon conceived the idea of collecting the songs and ditties as they came from Mrs. Goose and other sources, and published them for the benefit of the world, not forgetting himself. This he did: and thus "Mother Goose's Melodies" were brought forth.

It may well be doubted whether any one book, or all of them together, have passed through so many editors and editions, or have been read by so many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, put so many to sleep, or in generations done so much good for the world as the simple melodies of Mother Goose.