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Charming Characters of 19th-Century Children’s Literature Populate New Morse Exhibition

Note to Editors: A high-resolution image of Boy Holding Apple Pie, an 1886 woodblock print from the Kate Greenaway book A Apple Pie is available for download at <http://goo.gl/nJbQ8m>. For more images from this exhibition, please e-mail pubaffairs@morsemuseum.org or call (407) 645-5311.

WINTER PARK, Florida—On October 29, the Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art opens an exhibition of 19th-century children’s literature from its permanent collection.

Lullaby and Goodnight—Children’s Literature from the Morse Collection focuses on three authors noted for their contributions to early children’s literature: Kate Greenaway (1846–1901), Mary Dow Brine (1836–1925), and Eulalie Osgood Grover (1873–1958). Each took separate paths to strengthen their appeal through illustration. The exhibition includes almost 20 books by these authors as well as vintage dolls, Rookwood ceramic nursery tiles, and even a c. 1915 rocking chair from the Chicago bedroom of the museum’s founder, Jeannette Genius McKean.

The books in this exhibition reflect the fact that by 1900, the principle of unified design was well established. Many artists held that good design should unify all aspects of the visual environment—from ceramics and glassware to furniture and wallpaper—and that the useful should be beautiful and part of a harmonious home. This philosophical approach to design required that even children’s literature be fully integrated with an enhanced visual environment. As part of the Aesthetic movement, children’s books were part of a broad social effort to instill an early appreciation of beauty and, in turn, improve the character of children. While today the

thrust of books for children—primers, fables, and nursery rhymes—is about literacy, the charming characters, captivating plots and whimsical prose of late 19th-century children’s books were instruments in spreading the gospel of beauty.

British artist and author Kate Greenaway used her illustrations for almanacs and collections of verse to portray the idyllic landscape as a playground for children dressed in the sumptuous clothing of the period. Her style offered a romanticized escape from the realities of the ever-encroaching industrialized world.

Mary Dow Brine, an American poet, author and lyricist, collaborated with many talented artists as well as composers to elevate her words and is perhaps best known for her poem, "Somebody's Mother." At the Morse, her most noteworthy work is *My Boy and I or On the Road to Slumberland*, a poem and lullaby written for one of the very few books Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933) published. This leather-bound edition from 1881 will be on view in the exhibition.

Writer Eulalie Osgood Grover, a native of the Midwest who retired to Winter Park in 1926, collaborated with illustrator Bertha L. Corbett (1872–1950) to produce *The Sunbonnet Babies’ Primer* for elementary-school textbooks. The Sunbonnet Babies became so universally loved that they were used in advertising, on sheet music and post cards, and they even adorned a line of juvenile pottery produced by Roseville Pottery.

The Morse Museum, located at 445 N. Park Avenue, is open 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. November through April, the museum’s public hours on Friday are extended to 8 p.m. with free admission after 4 p.m. Regular admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$1 for students, and free for children younger than age 12. For more information, call (407) 645-5311 or visit www.morsemuseum.org.

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