

Children's Books and Children's Art

BY PAT DUNEMAN

Childhood is a time filled with unforgettable happenings that turn into unforgettable memories. But memories, like times, change. Memories are updated and are different as the generations pass. What a father remembers of winter, such as sleigh rides, may change to be his son's winter memories of snowmobile rides. This doesn't mean a memory is lost, it is just changed.

One of a child's greatest memories, or triumphs, is learning to read, and an obvious part of this learning takes place at the public library. But before a child is fully on his own to read, he wants someone to read to him. Again the library comes into the picture with its Saturday morning Story Hour.

On a cold winter Saturday morning the child bundles up and trudges happily to the "library"

with the precious books he has learned to "read" clutched tightly to him. Most often these books are many pictures and few words, but that's what the librarian recommended for this five year old.

If the youngster was born before 1955, he and all the other children gathered around a young woman in front of the fireplace in the Cresco Public Library and sat back to listen to the adventures of Winnie the Pooh or some tales from Mother Goose.

All children get restless after awhile, and as the readers voice continues on, the child's attention wanders about the room. His eyes catch a patch of color and come to rest on three unique windows in the south wall.

Here, three nursery rhymes are portrayed in stained glass. Each window boasts a different rhyme to fascinate and entertain the child.

As the sun shines through the windows Little Miss Muffet is brightened, and he notices the famous spider that frightened her. In the window next to Miss Muffet is Little Bo Peep and the sheep she lost. In the third window is his friend from Ride A Cock Horse on her way to Banbury Cross. With the colored glass and bright sunlight, the nursery rhymes come alive for the child.

When story hour is over, the child runs home to tell his mother all about the pretty people in the window at the library. Smiling faintly, the mother nods and sends the child out to play.

The child's pretty people in the window were brought to Cresco by the club women of Cresco. In 1914 when the library was built, the women felt the nursery story windows would add to the childrens' section of the library. Money was raised to cover the cost of the windows

and \$303.79 was paid to the Minnesota Art Glass Company of St. Paul when they supplied the windows. With the help of L. F. Parkinson and Company, general contractor, the windows were placed where they are today.

Even though the windows are not in what is today's childrens' library, people still notice them. One avid library visitor commented, "I think they're novel. They add an old home touch."

Now when the child has grown older he ceases to marvel at the figures in the windows but he continues to admire them whenever he comes to the library. The windows have become part of his childhood, something he's too old to seek childish entertainment from, yet they are too treasured to forget.

Yet the story of the three windows is not

Continued on B 6

6-TIMES-PLAIN DEALER, Cresco, Iowa, Wednes

Children's Library

Continued from B 1

finished, it has just become a childhood memory for many.

It was said earlier, if the child was born before 1955 the windows could be a part of his childhood. This doesn't mean anyone born after that was robbed of a memory, the memory was just changed and the location was moved.

In 1961 the childrens' library was moved downstairs in the public library. The basement was remodeled, painted, and furnished with child size furniture.

Now when children come to story hour, they arrive through their own childrens' entrance. Today if a child's attention wanders while listening to a story he won't be entertained by three stained glass windows. But he will notice the five hand-painted murals on the walls. These murals are equally as unique as the three windows. Each represents a nursery story and all are done by local art talent.

Continued on the table of the (Top-

On the north wall is the fable of the "Tortoise and the Hare" with of course, the hare finishing last. It was painted by Shirley Fenske (now Mrs. Louis Peter of Cresco). In the southeast corner swims Herman Melville's Great White Whale. Moby Dick was painted by Mark Smeby, son of the Rev. and Mrs. Carsten Smeby of Cresco.

Next to the well-known whale is a boy just as famous. Tom Sawyer is portrayed by Dave Rassmon as Tom tricks the other boys into whitewashing his picket fence. On the wall behind the librarian's desk, Dave Bakken painted a troll guarding his bridge as three goats try to cross it in "Three Billygoats Gruff". And last but not least, Kathy Jones, now married and living in New York, left blonde little Alice standing with White Rabbit guarding the doorway to the childrens' reading room.

All five of these people were art students of Richard Stevens, Crestwood's art teacher, in 1963 when the murals were done. The students did the murals as projects and all chose their own subject story.

Time passes and memories are made, the memories change but living in minds, they are never lost.

When Andrew Carnegie was distributing his wealth in the early 1900's, his biggest gift was the fund for establishing the Carnegie public libraries. He thought it was his duty as a wealthy man to do this. Cresco was fortunate enough to receive money from the fund. Although many towns received money from Mr. Carnegie, few of the other libraries would have impressed him more than the Cresco Public Library.