Guide to the Thomas Nast Scrapbooks

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Guide to the Thomas Nast Scrapbooks, 1873-1881

Collection number: Wyles Mss 86

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Thomas Nast Scrapbooks,
Date (inclusive): 1873-1881
Collection Number: Wyles Mss 86
Creator: Nast, Thomas, 1840-1902
Extent: 1.2 linear feet (4 oversize boxes)
Repository: University of California, Santa Barbara. Library, Department of Special Collections
Santa Barbara, California 93106-9010
Physical Location: Del Sur Oversize
Language: English.
Access Restrictions
None.
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Acquisition Information
Undetermined.

Biography
Thomas Nast is considered to be the single most important political cartoonist in American history. He was born in Germany in 1840, but was raised in New York City after his father decided the conservative Bavarian government was too oppressive. Inspired in part by the famous cartoonist John Tenniel, the young Nast sought to have his drawings published in the national magazines. He made his first sale at the age of 15, and in 1862 he secured a full-time position at the
recently-founded Harper's Weekly, where he would spend most of his career. Throughout the Civil War, Nast used his cartoons to build public support for both Abraham Lincoln and the anti-slavery movement. He continued to support African American civil rights after the war, even lampooning Andrew Johnson for undermining Lincoln's policies. In 1869, Nast turned his attentions to the corrupt political machine in New York led by William "Boss" Tweed. For years, Nast satirized Tweed and his Tammany Hall cronies, stirring up popular outrage. Eventually, Tweed's power base collapsed, and he was arrested and imprisoned for corruption. Nast's popularity was such that he was considered a key player in presidential elections from Abraham Lincoln in 1864 to Grover Cleveland in 1884. Thomas Nast also developed numerous American cultural icons, including the Democratic donkey, the Republican elephant, and the thin, goatee-sporting Uncle Sam. He was also the first to portray the familiar image of the fat red-suited Santa Claus. Nast exerted a tremendous influence on all American political cartoonists of the early 20th century, and has even been credited with influencing the work of European artists such as Vincent van Gogh and Edgar Degas.

After leaving Harper's Weekly in 1886, Nast struggled financially until President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him U.S. consul in Ecuador in 1902. He died of yellow fever late in that year, at the age of 62.

Further information about Thomas Nast may be found in works such as:
  Nast, Thomas. Thomas Nast: Drawings Published in Harper's Weekly, 1859-1886 (1931?).

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection contains four scrapbooks with pasted-in cartoons of Thomas Nast, which appeared Harper's Weekly. The items in each scrapbook are arranged chronologically.

UCSB Special Collections also has bound issues of Harper's Weekly for 1857-1915.

| Box 1   | Scrapbook 1, 1873 - 1875 |
| Box 2   | Scrapbook 2, 1876 - 1877 |
| Box 3   | Scrapbook 3, 1878 - 1881 |
| Box 4   | Scrapbook 4, 1879 - 1880 |