COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LAC DU FLAMBEAU
APRIL 2024 NEWSLETTER
VOLUME XXII ISSUE IV

Our Mission Statement:

As people of God and servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, we believe our Mission to be the building of a strong fellowship, ministering to the Spiritual and physical needs of the church, the community, and the world fulfilling our Lord's command to "Love our neighbors."

SPECIAL DAYS FOR APRIL 2024

Earth Day	April 22, 2024
Administrative Professionals Day	April 24, 2024

BIRTHDAYS

Tyler Trobaugh April 16

ANNIVERSARIES

No known Anniversaries in April

Scripture readings for April

April 7 – 2nd Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:32-35 *and Ps. 133 or* Isa. 65:17-25 *and Ps. 3;* 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

April 14 – 3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 3:12-19 *and Ps. 4 or* Isa. 6:1-9a *and Ps. 40:1-5;* 1 John 3:1-7; Luke 24:36b-48

April 21 – 4th Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:5-12 *and Ps. 23 or* Zechariah. 10:1-12 *and Ps. 80:1-7;* 1John 3:16-24; John 10:11-18

April 28 – 5th Sunday of Easter

Acts 8:26-40 *and Ps. 22:25-31 and* Ex. 19:1-6 *and Ps. 118:19-25;* 1 John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8

WE ARE IN NEED OF PEOPLE TO SIGN UP FOR:

GREETER
USHERS
LITURGISTS

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Articles are to be submitted by the last Sunday of the month.

If you are online, the following web addresses will provide you with news and information about the General Assembly, Synod of Lakes and Prairies, and the Presbytery of Northern Waters www.pcusa.org/crisis; outreach/evangelism; www.stopinfindout.org; northern waters.net. We also have the Newsletter on our website: www.ldfchurch.com.

April Fools: The Roots of an International Tradition

March 28, 2016

Posted by: Stephen Winick

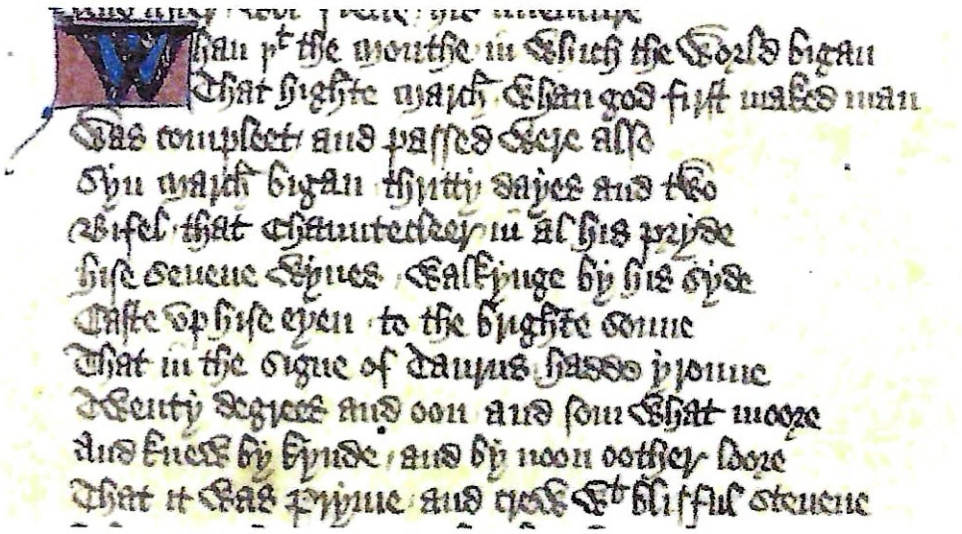
Scan your favorite newspapers or news websites this April 1, and chances are you'll see some headlines that look suspicious. Read further, and you'll probably find that some of those stories are complete hoaxes. After all, it's April Fools' Day.

But where do we get the strange custom of playing pranks on April 1? The short answer is that nobody knows for sure. All we know is that the custom was known in Renaissance Europe, and probably has roots older than that.

Some people think the idea of April Fools' Day goes back to classical Roman times, when a joyful festival called Hilaria, originally probably an equinox celebration, came to be celebrated on March 25. In Roman terms, March 25 was called "the eighth of the Calends of April," which associates the festival strongly with April 1, the Calends of April. However, there's no hard evidence to connect Hilaria with April Fools' Day, so this is just one of many guesses advanced by curious people.

Another common theory placing the origin of April Fools' Day in the Roman Empire dates it to the reign of Emperor Constantine. According to this story, a group of fools or jesters convinced Constantine to make one of them "king for a day." Constantine obliged, and one of the jesters, named "Kugel," was appointed to the position. He decreed that it would be a day of jollity, and thus created what came to be called April Fools' Day.

The only problem with that story is that it's a hoax. As this news story reveals, it was itself an April Fools' Day prank, pulled by Boston University professor Joseph Boskin on Associated Press reporter Fred Bayles in 1983. Bayles reported the story, and the AP ran it, only to retract it some days later. This is a good object lesson: do not take as fact everything you read about April Fools' Day. (But don't worry–you can totally trust me!)



A detail from the Ellesmere Manuscript, f. 182 v. It shows a part of Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*, occurring on a date which is apparently April 1. The text begins: Whan that the month in which the world bigan, That highte March, whan God first maked man, Was compleet, and passed were also, Syn March bigan, thritty dayes and two. See the Manuscript at the Huntington Digital Library.

People have long speculated about the origins of this most foolish holiday, suggesting the Roman Saturnalia, Druidic rites in Britain, the carnivalesque medieval celebration of the Feast of Fools, and even the Indian festival of Holi as possible origins. But despite attempts to establish an earlier origin for the day, clear references to a tradition of fooling in April don't begin until the late Middle Ages.

It's possible that there's a glimpse of April Fools' Day in Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale" (ca. 1390), which shows the rooster Chauntecleer being fooled by, and in turn fooling, a fox. This occurs "Syn March bigan, thritty dayes and two," or 32 days after March began, i.e. April 1. This would be an early, clear reference to the date, but many scholars think the word "bigan" is a scribal error, and that the intended date was May 2, thirty-two days after March was over. Even if this is true, the existence of such a scribal error could suggest that medieval scribes expected stories like this to occur on April 1. Still, this doesn't qualify as hard evidence of an April Fools' custom.

In France, "poisson d'avril," or "April fish," is the name for a person duped on April Fools' Day. The first reference to "poisson d'avril" is from a 1508 poem by Eloy D'Amerval called *Le Livre de la Deablerie*, or *The Book of Deviltry* (available online here from the French national library's Gallica site.) However, from the context we can't be sure if the author was referring to April 1 or to fools in general. The idea of the "April fish" seems to be the fact that fish were plentiful and hungry in the spring, and thus easy to catch—an "April fish" was more gullible than a fish at other times of the year. Thus, a mere reference to an "April fish" does not itself prove there was a holiday on April 1.

This woodcut from Eloy D'Amerval's 1508 *Livre de la Deablerie* purports to show Eloy at work. In fact it was a woodcut used by early French printers to represent other authors as well. [Public Domain Image.]

Some sources, such as Charles Panati's *Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things*, cite another 16th-century French origin: 1564, when the celebration of the New Year officially moved to January 1 by Charles IX's Edict of Rousillon. According to Panati, the New Year had previously been celebrated on March 25 because of the advent of spring, with a week-long observance ending on April 1. Panati further claims:

> Many Frenchmen who resisted the change, and others who merely forgot about it, continued partying and exchanging gifts during the week ending April 1. Jokers ridiculed these conservatives' steadfast attachment to the old New Year's date by sending foolish gifts and invitations to nonexistent parties.

The real history of New Year's observances in France is more complex, with different regions celebrating at different times. As early as 1507, books were printed in France which indicated that people were beginning the year on January 1, as Arthur Tilley explained in a 1904 book on Renaissance literature. Moreover, Panati does not provide any concrete evidence of any his claims in the form of contemporary accounts or surviving invitations–not even for the claim of a week-long celebration, which is necessary to involve April 1 in the New Year change. In all, we'll have to consider his story to be interesting speculation.

Portrait of Pope Gregory XIII, who is responsible for the Gregorian Calendar. Mehrerau Monastery, Bregenz, Vorarlberg, Austria. Photo is an original work by Wikimedia user Andreas Praefcke, who assigned it to the Public Domain.

The tale that April Fools' Day derives from a calendar change in France exists in several versions, including one cited in Jack Santino's *All Around the Year*. In this version, the change occurred because of the switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, which France adopted in 1582. The same story is used to explain the origin of various other holidays, including "old Christmas," as Carl Fleischhauer and I discussed in the comments to a previous blog post. Since this appears to be a traditional story that occurs in several variants localized to different holidays, times, and places, it might be good to look at the calendar-change story as a "migratory legend." It's also an example of "metafolklore," or folklore about folklore, in this case a folk story about the origins of a folk holiday. (As I discussed in another previous blog post, the story being "metafolklore" does not necessarily mean it is untrue, but it often means not all variants can be true simultaneously!)

The first certain reference to April Fools' Day comes from a 1561 Flemish poem by Eduard De Dene, which you can read here. (But only if your Renaissance Flemish is good!) In the poem, a nobleman sends his servant on crazy, fruitless errands. The servant recognizes that he is being sent on "fool's errands" because it's April 1.

English antiquarian John Aubrey (1626-1697) was one of the premiere folklorists of his day, but the word "folklore" had not yet been coined. He gives us the first clear account of April Fools' Day in English. [Public Domain Image.]

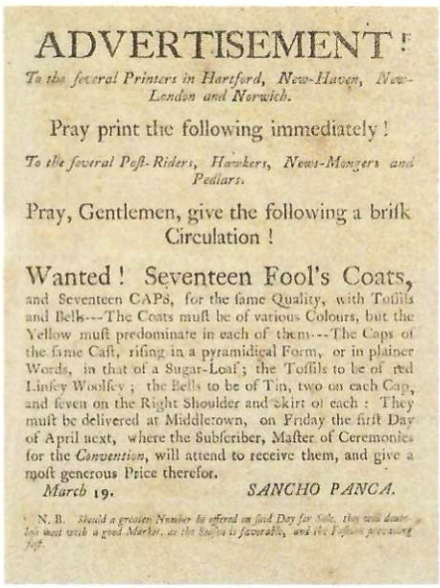
Eduard de Dene's trick, in which someone is assigned an errand to find a nonexistent object or person, is still a popular April Fools' joke over 450 years later. A 1902 article in the Akron *Daily Democrat* [top of column 2] explains:

> One of the most popular amusements on April 1...is the sending of persons on fruitless errands. Unsophisticated persons are sent to the bookstores for a copy of the "History of Eve's Grandmother," or to the chemist's shop for "pigeon's milk," while small boys are sometimes sent to the harness shop for strap oil, when a liberal dose of this treatment is usually administered to the boy.

If nothing else, the longevity of this joke is a testament to the enduring power of even the most foolish folk traditions! [1]

In 1686, antiquarian John Aubrey (1626-1697) first mentions April Fools' Day in English in his book *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme*, as "Fooles Holy Day," explaining: "We observe it on the first of April. And so it is kept in Germany everywhere." In 1760, among the earliest English speculations about the origin of the holiday appeared in *Poor Robin's Almanac*:

> The First of April some do say
> Is set apart for all Fool's Day
> But why the people call it so
> Nor I nor they themselves do know [2]



ADVERTISEMENT!

To the several Printers in Hartford, New-Haven, New-London and Norwich.

Pray print the following immediately!

To the several Post-Riders, Hawkers, News-Mongers and Pedlars.

Pray, Gentlemen, give the following a brisk Circulation!

Wanted! Seventeen Fool's Coats,

and Seventeen CAPS, for the same Quality, with Toffils and Bells---The Coats muſt be of various Colours, but the Yellow muſt predominate in each of them---The Caps of the same Cast, rising in a pyramidical Form, or in plainer Words, in that of a Sugar-Loaf; the Toffils to be of red Linsey Woolsey; the Bells to be of Tin, two on each Cap, and seven on the Right Shoulder and Skirt of each: They muſt be delivered at Middletown, on Friday the first Day of April next, where the Subscriber, Master of Ceremonies for the *Convention*, will attend to receive them, and give a most generous Price therefor.

March 19. SANCHO PANCA.

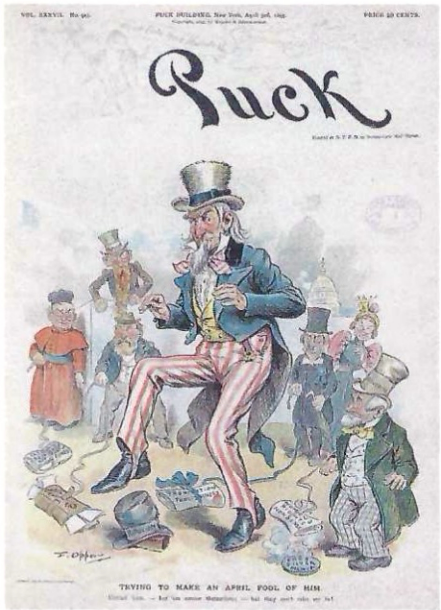
N.B. *Should a greater Number be offered on said Day for Sale, they will doubtless meet with a good Market, as the Season is favorable, and the Inducements pressing just.*

This 1796 handbill shows that April Fools' Day was well known in Connecticut by 1796.

A 1771 diary entry written by Anna Green Winslow in Boston shows that the holiday was known in Canada and New England by the same era [3]. Green carefully emphasizes the date twice, and suggests the idea of the "wild goose chase," implying her father had sent her mother on such a chase on April Fools' Day in 1768–although the prank may also consist of asking her mother to remember an event that never happened, another kind of "wild goose chase." The entry ran:

> April 1st.–Will you be offended mamma, if I ask you, if you remember the flock of wild Geese that papa call'd you to see flying over the Blacksmith's shop this day three years? I hope not; I only mean to divert you. [...] N.B. It is 1 April.

A 1796 handbill requesting the delivery of 17 fool's coats and caps to Middletown, Connecticut, on April 1 is another good example of the celebration of April Fools' Day in 18th-century America. By the nineteenth century the holiday was widespread and popular, so that references to it were frequent in newspapers, such as the ones at this link, from the Library's *Chronicling America* project.



"Trying to make an April fool of him" by Frederick Burr Opper, 1857-1937. Published by Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1895 April 3.

By the late nineteenth century, April Fools' Day tricks had developed into more elaborate forms, and there were three common artistic representations of April Fools' pranks. The first one showed a brick under a hat on a sidewalk, the idea being that someone would eventually succumb to the urge to kick the hat and thus stub his toe on the brick. [4] The second involved leaving a supposedly lost, desirable object, such as a wallet or money, in plain view, with a string tied around it. The other end of the string was held by a hidden prankster, who would pull the string and snatch away the object when a passer-by tried to take it. The third was a smoking coin, indicating a coin that had been heated up with fire or a cigar, and then left where someone might pick it up and get burned. [5]

The Library of Congress Prints and Photographs division has numerous examples of artistic representations of these pranks in political cartoons and magazine illustrations. The one at left illustrates all three pranks. It's entitled "Trying to Make an April Fool of Him," and shows many political temptations laid out for Uncle Sam. It was the cover of Puck Magazine, April 3, 1895, illustrated by Frederick Burr Opper.

Around the same time, April Fools' Day also made its way into folksong. In particular, a ballad known as "Campbell the Drover," "Three English Rovers," or "The First Day of April," pits an Irishman against his English neighbors in a battle of April Fools' Day tricks. When the Englishmen take Pat Campbell to a tavern and leave him to pay the bill, Campbell "pays it forward" by tricking the landlord and getting away. The ballad was known in Ireland, and considered an "old come-all-ye" by the 1920s [6]. In 1938, Alan Lomax collected a version from John Green in Beaver Island, Michigan. Hear it in the player below; the lyrics follow that.

"The First Day of April" by John Green (AFC 1939/007: AFS 02278 B)

Audio Controls

The First Day of April

This card from the Sola Busca Tarot Deck, probably created by Nicola di maestro Antonio (1448-1511) represents The Fool as a bagpipe player! [Public Domain Image.]

The first day of April I'll never forget
When three English blades together had met
They mounted on horseback and swore bitterly
That they'd play a trick on the first man they see

Chorus: And sing fol the rol dol daddly
Fol the rol dol daddly
Fol dol the rol dol daddly
Fol the rol dee

Pat Campbell the Drover they happened to spy
He came from Tyrone, a place called Dun High
They've greeted Campbell and he's done the same
And in close conversation together they came.

They rode right along and they made a full stop
They called upon Paddy for to take a drop
And Paddy consented, and said he with a smile
"I long for to taste some good ale from Carlisle"

They ate and they drank and they sported as well
Until 48 shillings to pay up the bill
Likewise for their horses, some oats and good hay
And they thought they'd leave Paddy the reckoning to pay

Out of the house they stole one by one
They thought they'd leave Paddy to pay for the whole
The Landlord came in, and this he did say
"I'm afraid, Irish Pat, they've a trick on you played."

"Never mind them" says Pat, "although they're gone away
I've got plenty of money the reckoning to pay
If you sit down beside me before that I go
I will tell you a secret perhaps you don't know"

"I'll tell you a secret contrary to law
There's three kinds of wine from one puncheon I'll draw"
The Landlord was eager to find out that plan
And away to the cellar with Paddy he ran

He bored a hole in a very short space
And he bade the landlord place his thumb on that place
The next one he bored, "place the other one there,"
And I for a tumbler will go up the stair

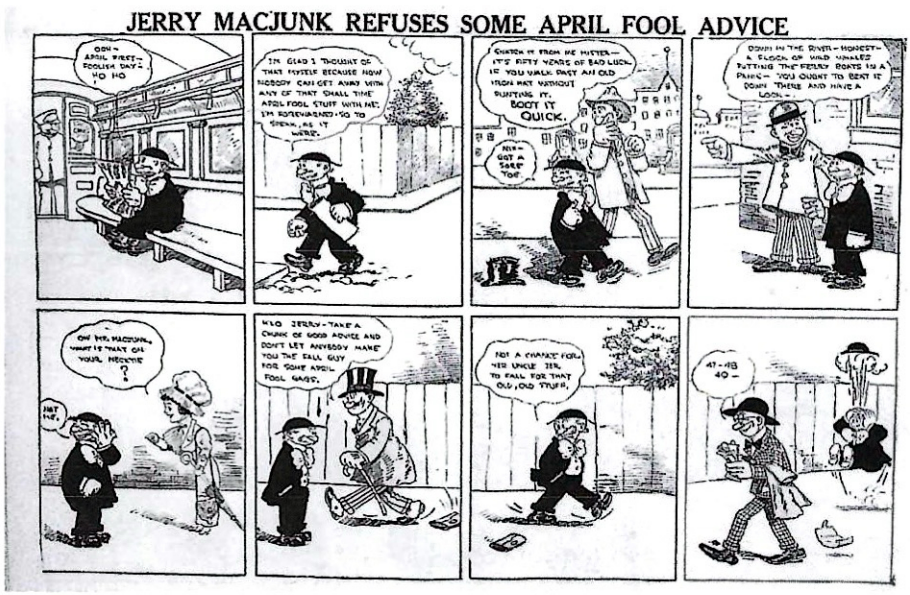
Pat mounted his horse and was soon out of sight
The hostler came in to see if all was right
They hunted the house, from the top to the ground
And half dead in the cellar, their master he found

Another side to the April Fools' holiday, especially in America, is that schoolchildren love to pull pranks on their teachers. One common prank was to lock the teacher out of the school altogether. Dr. Samuel Lathan was born in 1842 in rural South Carolina. In a 1938 interview conducted by the WPA, he recalled his own school days:

> April the 1st was dreaded by most rural school teachers. The pupils would get inside and bar the teacher out. The teacher, who didn't act on the principle that discretion is the better part of valor, generally got the worst of it. Mr. Douglass soon learned this, and, on April Fools' Day, he would walk to the school, perceive the situation, laughingly announce there would be no school until the morrow, and leave.

A 1968 interview with an African American student in Washington, D.C., part of the American Folklife Center's Center for Applied Linguistics collection, shows that the tradition of fooling the teacher lasted over a century. "I believe it was April Fools' Day," says the student. "[He] put tacks on a piece of tape and the teacher sat on them. She said she was going to fail everybody in class. But, I think, she found out who did it, you know. He was put out of school."

April Fools' Day continues to be popular today, so my advice is to be careful, both here online and in the real world. Watch out for tacks on your chair, don't plug any holes with your thumbs, and if you see a hat lying on the street, just walk on by!



This 1917 cartoon shows several common April Fools' jokes. See the original here.

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TREASURER: Bill Raduege

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