



## Aunty Minte, 1867

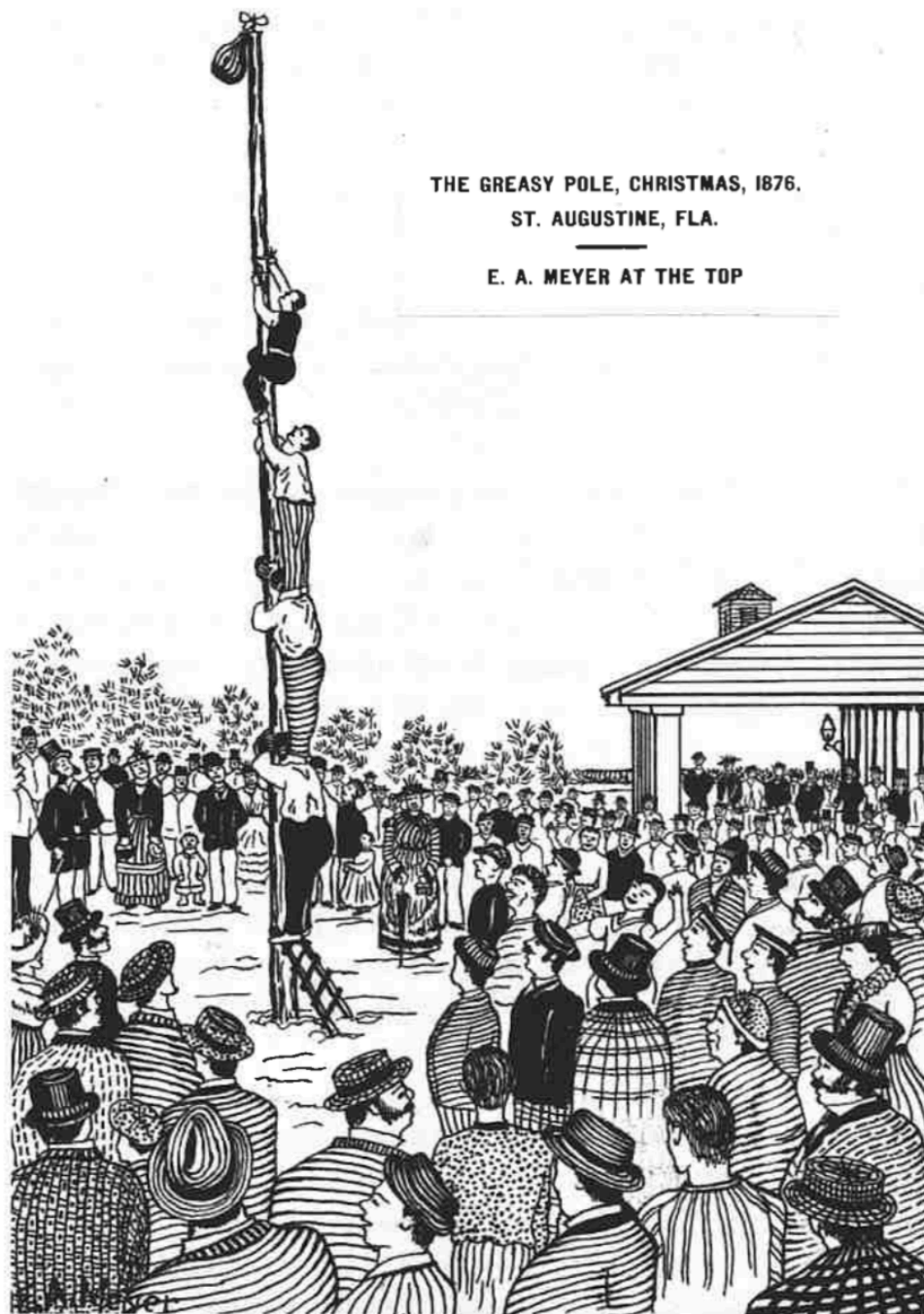
Check out Earnest A. Meyer's account of spending Christmas 1876 with Minte's son, Thomas, and the community, one of the only accounts that references her.



We stood around taking a rest and deciding what to do next, when two sailors, from the buoy-tender, anchored in the river, beckoned me over and said if I could get two pieces of rope, each a yard long, they would show me how to use the rope by twisting it around the pole and work myself to the top. I went to the yacht basin where my rowboat was tied, cut off two pieces from the anchor rope, and when I came back, they had procured four short sticks that they tied to each end. We tackled the pole again with renewed vigor, and after numerous attempts, and following the instructions of the two sailors, I succeeded in placing the two ropes around the pole. There was I hanging in mid-air while the rest had slid to the bottom. I held on as best I could, though the strain on my arm muscles was great. I decided, with great effort, to draw my legs up and over the lower rope, which relieved me very much. Now I could loosen my top rope, shove it up and the tighten same, then reach down to the bottom rope and do the same. Sometimes I would slide back a short distance. While I was struggling to reach the top, my companions and the crowd would cheer and encourage me by saying, "keep going," "don't give up," "you will make it" etc. Finally I reached the top, relaxed for a few moments to get my breath, then I gave that ham several terrific whacks, and then the crowd went wild with hurrahs!

The barracks band, stationed on the south side of the Plaza, blared out a loud and lively tune! Cannon from the barracks gave out several loud booms! I then let myself down gradually, and after the excitement subsided, a long ladder was procured and the ham, a ten dollar bill and several one dollar bills was brought down and given to us. It was easy to divide the money. The ham was the problem...how to cut it in four equal parts. Everybody had a solution, one said, "Why not get a cabbage and some potatoes and have a feast."

Thomas would like to have the ham, so we four went over to C.F. Hamblen's Grocery Store, had it weighed and appraised- \$2.85. Thomas dickered with one of the party and bought him out, but still we were in a predicament as before. Then Thomas persuaded the second party to sell out which he did, and that left only me and Thomas to deal with, while the spectators was giving out wise cracks. Thomas bought out my share and he became the possessor of the whole ham, but with very little money. I received \$4.85 for my share. So ends the Christmas Day, 1876, that will long be remembered, when in my boyhood days I reached the top of a greasy pole (with the help of the other three), and little did I think, the night before, that I would be one of the participants.



**Earnest Meyer, 1864** Mr. Meyer drew this as part of a collection he originally published between 1940 and 1946 as *Pen Drawings*. He died in St. Augustine in 1949 at the age of 85. The original work is in the St. Augustine Historical Society Research Library (henceforth referred to as the SAHS).