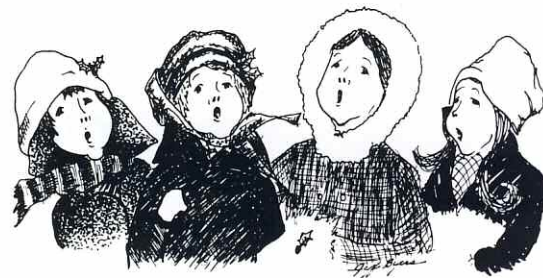


Byers' Choice® Ltd. Caroler Chronicle



Winter 1990

Pam Trauger, Editor

Vol. III Edition III



Caroler Look-Alike Contest

Has anyone ever told you that you resembled one of the Carolers in your collection? If so, you could be the winner of our Caroler Look-Alike Contest. But don't fret. Even if your mouth doesn't naturally form the perfect "o", you still have a chance to win. Just dress up yourself, your kids, your spouse, pets, friends, or neighbors as your favorite Caroler or group of Carolers and send us a photo. The pictures we judge to be closest to the real thing and the most fun will be published in a future issue and the winning entrants will receive some great prizes, too. Deadline for entries is December 25, 1990, so hurry and mail your winning photo, along with your name, address, and phone number to:

Byers' Choice® Ltd.
CAROLER LOOK-ALIKE CONTEST
P.O. Box 158
Chalfont, PA 18914





Christkindlmarkt

A German Tradition Lives On

A few years back, Joyce and Bob took a Christmastime trip to Germany, where they perused the holiday wares at the famous Christkindlmarks, or “Christ child markets.” They thought you might like to learn a little about this centuries-old European tradition.

The tradition of German Christmas markets dates back more than six centuries. The first market was thought to have been held in Munich in the year 1310. The markets are generally held outdoors in a town’s main square, which usually has a church or cathedral as its focal point.

A wide variety of goods is sold at these holiday markets, which usually begin selling around the beginning of Advent. Shoppers can purchase toys and games, ornaments and decorations, handcrafted gifts and trinkets, and scrumptious treats like marzipan cookies and Lebkuchen hearts (see recipe on page 5).

A fairy tale market not to be missed on any trip to Germany is held year-round in the town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, a quaint, medieval-appearing town overlooking the Tauber River. About 15 years ago, the Wohlfahrt family decided that Rothenburg would be the ideal place to set up a Christmas shop. They got a modest start selling music boxes made in the Erz Gebirge region of Germany, an area where Christmas traditions have long been a part of everyday life. Today, countless angels, dolls, fluffy animals, nutcrackers,



and wooden incense figures are included among the more than 35,000 different items for sale in Rothenburg’s Christmas market. The town also boasts the world’s largest nutcracker and biggest Christmas pyramid. Also not to be missed is a village of more

than 100 houses depicting in miniature how Rothenburg appeared in the Middle Ages.

Another must-see on a Christmastime trip to Germany is the market at Nuremberg, perhaps the best known Christkindlmarkt. It was at this market that the first tinsel angel was sold. Legend has it that the only daughter of a talented craftsman died, and he knew he could never be happy again. One night his daughter appeared to him in a dream as a splendid angel; from this memory of her, he fashioned a wooden head painted with the girl’s features, a gown and cornet of thin brass called “tinsel” and two wings. His fellow craftsmen were so enthralled by his beautiful creation that they persuaded him to make another angel to sell at the Christmas market. Since then, the tinsel angel has become a hallmark of the German Christmas market, with millions having been made and sold. It is said that the craftsman became wealthy through the sale of his angelic tree-toppers and that he received some comfort from the beautiful tinsel creation that served as a memorial to his much loved daughter.

Other enchanting markets are held yearly in cities such as D i n k e l s b u e h l , Michelstadt, and Deidesheim. And now, with the reunification of the two Germans even more cities and towns will be open to holiday travelers to enjoy the sights, sounds, tastes, and smells of a true German Christmas.



Essay Contest Winners Sh

Congratulations to our Christmas Memories essay contest winners Marybeth Salkind of Perkasio, Pa., and Miriam Stauder of Edgewater, Md. Both of our winners received a copy of the Byers' Choice edition of *A Christmas Carol*, signed by Joyce.

Marybeth sent us a delightful tale of "The Kitten Who Came With The Tree." The story begins as Marybeth realizes that Christmas is fast approaching and all of the cleaning and decorating have yet to be done...

Working full time and keeping a home, I saw the holidays approaching fast, and we were nowhere near ready. I had only one day to get the whole job done.

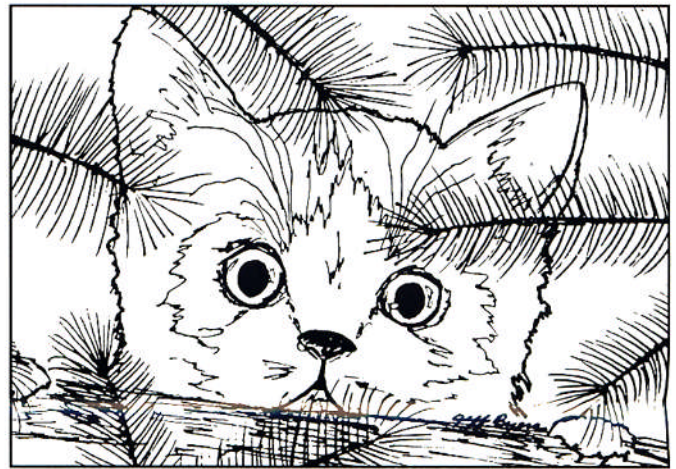
My husband had left the house early in the day to run last minute errands and buy the Christmas tree. He knew me well enough to stay out of my way. Our plan was that he would leave the tree in our snowcovered backyard until the house was clean and ready.

I started at the top of our three-story house and worked down, dusting corners, vacuuming, moving furniture, polishing. Room by room I advanced in a cleaning frenzy. Finally I spent most of the evening scrubbing a kitchen that had been neglected during the past year of hurried dinners and casual cleanups. It was 11:30 before I finished. I was exhausted. Fueled by coffee and anticipation, I had done the impossible: I had cleaned the entire house in one day.

But there was still one last task—bringing in the Christmas tree. My husband had left it, bundled and lying on its side, in a sheltered corner of our yard. I carried it through the back door into the living room. Out of the corner of my eye, I thought I saw a shadow scurry past me. After a day of chasing cobwebs, I didn't pay attention and went on with my happy task, and then dropped wearily into bed.

The next morning and afternoon, Christmas Eve day, we finished preparations for our evening of tree-trimming and entertainment. In our home, the tree is never decorated until Christmas Eve. My husband had picked a fine tree that year, a pine that was bushy and even with a straight trunk. It filled the house with a smell that set off a thousand Christmas memories.

I began stringing the lights before our guests arrived. As I reached to place a string of large lights in the center of the tree, I felt a quick, painful scratch across my hand and heard a frightening hiss. When I pulled back my hand and peered through the branches, I saw a tiny kitten perched in the branches. As we made eye contact, she gave me another warning hiss. Foolishly, I reached in and tried to dislodge the kitten. She was not to be moved. She screeched, hissed, and clawed. I retreated.



The kitten had found a warm corner in a cruel world. It seems she was a hungry, terrified stray who had taken refuge in the branches of our tree as it lay in our cold, snowy yard. She must have been the shadow I had seen fleeting by the night before as I carried the tree into the house.

There was nothing to be done for our cat who came for Christmas. She would not leave her perch. We could not get another tree at that hour, and our guests were due at any moment. When our friends arrived, they suggested we decorate around the kitten. So we did. Tiny frightened eyes peered at us through the branches, but she never moved except to give a furious growl and bat a tiny paw at hands that came too close. A bundle of shaking fur turned into a buzzsaw as some of us tried to get her out of the tree: but we each tried just once.

We had two cats already (who hadn't noticed her yet), but one more wouldn't matter for a night or two. It was just another guest for the holiday. Leaving her in her little nest, we went on with our evening's activities. That night we left out food by the base of the tree.

On Christmas day we came downstairs to find our visitor had descended from her nest to join our ancient tomcat for a snooze on the sofa. She remained shy and skittish, but we fed her and kept her warm until we could find a home for her—the kitten who came with the tree.



are Christmas Memories

Miriam's Christmas memory took the form of a touching poem entitled

How Memories are Made

by Miriam Stauder

*On a Christmas Eve so long ago, Mama tucked me into bed,
We shared a story, then she listened while my prayers were being said.*

*As she turned to leave with a loving smile, beautiful music filled the air,
And she gathered me close and we knelt at the sill, a magical moment to share.*

*For there below were Carolers,
singing with joyous glee,
With heads thrown back and mouths agape,
a treat to hear and see.*

*"Oh, Mama, how beautiful," I whispered,
as too soon the sound did fade,
"Yes," she said softly, "hold on to it —
that's how memories are made."*

*Now Mama's gone but Christmas goes on,
a blessed time of the year,
A time to remember, a time to rejoice,
and hold on to all things dear.*

*So when the tree is trimmed and the house
is decked with greens,
I bring out my Carolers,
fondly creating many scenes.*

*There they stand proudly, with heads held high, ready to join in voice,
Each unique in his own way, but grouped together by choice.*

*So each year I look and remember with emotions that do not fade,
As I recall Mama's special words: "Hold on to it — that's how memories are made."*



Byers' Choice Events

This fall, "Byers' Choice Days" were held at Wayside Country Store in Marlborough, Mass., where Jeff Byers was on hand to sign Carolers, and at Christmas Dove in Barrington, N.H. If you missed these special events, we hope you'll try to attend one of these upcoming ones:

A special store event will take place November 17 at Lock, Stock, and Barrel Gifts, Rochester, N.Y.

And Bob and Joyce will be on hand to sign Carolers and copies of *A Christmas Carol* on:

November 10 at Long's Jewelers, Boston, Mass.

November 11 at Woodstock Inn, Woodstock, Vt.



A History of Cards

Judging from the tremendous response that our new postman and kids with cards Carolers have received, those holiday missives must mean a lot to all Christmas-philes. While New Year's greetings were exchanged by ancient Egyptians and Romans, and medieval Europeans gave wood blocks engraved with nativity scenes and religious motifs, it wasn't until England developed the "penny post" that true Christmas cards came to be.

The first known Christmas card was printed in 1843; 1,000 of these cards were sent that year. The hand-colored card bears a picture of an extended family gathered around a banquet table, toasting the season with goblets of wine. Grape trellises and vines form a border and the greeting appears on a red banner draped in front of the table: "A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year to You." Only 12 of this original Christmas card remain in existence today.

It wasn't long after this first card was produced that card manufacturing began to become an industry. It was the Christmas card entrepreneur,

Louis Prang, who brought card making to the United States. Prang saw Christmas cards as a vehicle for bringing fine art to the masses, and he ran yearly design competitions for which the top prize was \$1,000—a substantial sum in 1880. The cards themselves were dear, costing upwards of 75 cents each.

One of America's best known card manufacturers got its start in 1910, when Joyce C. Hall began to import Christmas cards to compete with Prang's art cards. Hall sold his cards in the Kansas City area. Together with his two brothers, he opened a specialty store that sold cards, gifts, and stationery. But in 1915 a fire destroyed the entire inventory. It was a case of good fortune in disguise, though, because soon after the fire the Hall brothers purchased an engraving firm where they began producing their own line of Christmas cards—and Hallmark Cards was born. Hallmark now offers a selection of 2,500 Christmas card designs each year.

As the years marched on, American Christmas card themes reflected the changing times: humor to abate the despair of the Depression era, patri-



tism during both World Wars, space traveling Santas during the Sputnik era, and themes of peace and love during the '60s and '70s. Who knows what the 90's will bring in terms of new and different Christmas card designs, but you can be assured that people will be exchanging these friendly missives, in whatever form, for many years to come.

LEBKUCHEN HEART

3 cups self-rising flour
2 teaspoons ground allspice
Pinch of salt
1/4 cup clear honey
1 cup packed dark brown sugar
3 tablespoons butter
1 egg, beaten
Finely grated peel of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon lemon juice
To Decorate:
8 oz. semisweet chocolate, melted
1 egg white
1-1/2 cups powdered sugar, sifted
Silver dragées

Preheat oven to 350F. Grease a large baking sheet with butter. Sift flour, allspice and salt into a large

bowl; make a well in the center. Put honey, brown sugar and butter in a small saucepan; stir over low heat until melted. Cool slightly. Pour into well; add beaten egg, lemon peel and juice. Mix to form a soft dough. Knead on a floured surface until smooth. Roll out dough to an 11" x 9" rectangle. Place on prepared baking sheet. Using a paper or cardboard template, cut out a large heart shape.

Remove trimmings from around heart; use to make Gingerbread Men. Bake heart 20 to 25 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove to wire rack; cool. When cool, place rack over a large baking sheet; coat heart with melted chocolate. Allow chocolate to set. In a medium-size bowl, beat egg white with



powdered sugar until mixture forms stiff peaks. Decorate heart, simply or elaborately, with icing and silver dragées.

Makes 1 Lebkuchen Heart.



Byers' Choice® Ltd.

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