

Byers' Choice® Ltd. Caroler Chronicle



Fall 1991

Pam Byers, Editor

Vol. IV Edition III

WORKING SANTA and MRS. CLAUS

The Working Santa and Mrs. Claus as we know them today will be retiring at the end of 1991. Working Santa has been a part of our collection since 1983. During the past nine years, we have made minor changes to his cap and his mittens due to the availability of striped knit fabrics, but his grey knit shirt, suspenders, and red knickers have gone unchanged. The most significant change through his eight year appearance occurred when the pencil he uses to check off his gift list was replaced with a white quill.

The popularity of Working Santa led us to develop this character into a display size of approximately three feet tall. He differed from the smaller version in that he wore slippers instead of boots. His long scroll of names rolled down to his feet as he separated the naughty from the nice. Working Santa display figures were available in 1984 and 1985.

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our first female Santa figure. Her red dress and white apron have remained virtually unchanged, but Mrs. Claus can be found holding a variety of different accessories including teddy bears, books, stockings and sacks filled with toys, just to name a few.


In 1986, a special edition of Mrs. Claus seated on a rocking chair, reading a Christmas book, and surrounded by toys was produced. This piece was mounted on a wooden base. A small edition of approximately 200 of this figure has a child dressed in a nightgown sitting on Mrs. Claus' lap.

Christmas would not be the same without this couple, so we will be introducing a new version of the jolly old pair in January 1992. Our new Santa will be hard at work putting the finishing

touches on a toy for a special child, while Mrs. Claus tries not to be seen as she puts the bow and card on her special Christmas gift for Santa. Keep your eyes open for these new Christmas traditions.



SALVATION ARMY KETTLE



One Christmas tradition that has an interesting history is the Salvation Army red kettle. Used to help over 4.5 million needy people in the United States during the holidays each year, it has become a symbol of caring for the less fortunate.

One hundred years ago, in 1891, the Salvation Army Captain Joseph McFee was determined to provide a free Christmas dinner for the poor of San Francisco; however, he needed some way to raise money for the food. He remembered from his days as a sailor in Liverpool, England, a large pot, called "Simpson's pot", located on the landing into which charitable contributions were thrown by passers-by. He quickly received permission to erect such a pot at the Oakland ferry

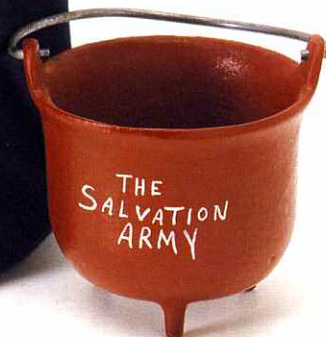
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in the original use of the kettle, William A. McIntyre, was transferred East. When he began his Christmas plans for Boston in 1897, a kettle was included. Fellow officers refused to participate in such a scheme, fearing that they would "make spectacles of themselves." So McIntyre and his family manned three kettles on the Washington Street thoroughfare in the heart of the city. That year, the kettle effort resulted in 150,000 Christmas dinners for the needy throughout the country.

In 1898, the *New York World* hailed the Salvation Army kettles as "the newest and most novel device for collecting money." The newspaper also observed, "There is a man in charge to see that contributions are not stolen."

In 1901, kettle contributions in New York City provided funds for the first mammoth sit-down dinner in Madison Square Garden, a custom that continued for many years. Today, however, families are given grocery checks so that they can buy and prepare their own dinners at home. The homeless are invited to share the holiday dinners and festivities at hundreds of Salvation Army centers across the country.

Now as the kettle effort celebrates its 100th anniversary, the familiar red Salvation Army kettle can be found in such far away locations as Chile, Korea, and much of Europe. Everywhere the goal is the same: to bring the spirit of Christmas to those who would be otherwise forgotten, the elderly, institutionalized, and the unfortunate. Even though the current kettle may appear a little different than that first one in San Francisco, the message has always remained the same: Sharing and Caring.



DECORATING WITH BYERS' CHOICE

One of the most enjoyable things about collecting the Carolers is finding fun new ways of displaying your collection during the holiday season. Many of you have sent in photographs showing some of the different ways Carolers are being displayed in homes during the holiday season. We thought many of these decorating ideas were so creative that we should share them with you.

Several of these home displays must have taken months of preparation and planning to create. We have received pictures showing everything from a scaled down village with the streets full of joyous carolers singing in harmony to a motorized rotating pond that actually sets a group of skaters in motion.

Realizing that many of you have neither the time, nor space to create these more elaborate settings, we have come up with several display ideas that are easy enough for anyone to put together. For those of you who have found that your collection has outgrown your fire-place mantle or display cabinet, you may enjoy displaying your Carolers in one of these ways.

One idea is to try decorating your Christmas tree with your Caroler family. This works best with an artificial tree so that you can support the

figurines with the wire branches, but if you're like us, and are set on having a real tree each year, try tying some fish line under the arms of your carolers and hanging them on the sturdier branches of your tree.

The Carolers can also be used to bring your Christmas wreaths to life by attaching several Carolers to the center. If you have an open staircase with a banister, simply place a figure on each step as if they're caroling into your living room.

They even make a beautiful center piece for your dining room table. Any one of these display ideas is sure to get compliments from your friends and family.

For those of you who have been collecting our pieces from the Dickens' series of *A Christmas Carol*, simply position your figures in your favorite scene from the story.

The skaters can be an exciting display item. It doesn't take long to cut out some tin foil in the shape of a frozen pond and place some skaters about, circling the ice. Add a bit of artificial snow around the edges to soften the look, and place a toddler on a sled or a pair of kids holding skates on the side to watch the festivities.

These ideas are just a few of the endless display possibilities to help you further enjoy your Caroler collection. All it takes is a little imagination, and you can create your own world for the Carolers.





THE BYERS' FOUNDATION

It has been said that it is Christmas 365 days a year at Byers' Choice. And just as Scrooge wakes up to find the special meaning of Christmas, we try to keep that feeling in our hearts all year long. Christmas is so much more than a holiday, it is a time to reach out and help those people who are less fortunate.

This has always been a concern of Bob and Joyce. They feel that one of the company's greatest responsibilities is to make the community a better place to live. Since the company was founded in 1981, they have made a conscious effort to put a significant portion of their profits back into the community, and for this end, the Byers' Foundation was officially formed.

The foundation has contributed to all kinds of worthy projects. Not only has it been a major benefactor to several Philadelphia homeless shelters, but it has provided the

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seed money to start two additional homes in Bucks County. It financially supports a local woman's shelter, meals-on-wheels program, and the Pearl S. Buck Foundation for Amerasian children. When a local town suffered from a devastating fire, the foundation was able to help them get a start in rebuilding.

There were other ways in which the foundation gave back to the community. It has emphasized the importance of the quality of life in the community, and has helped to sponsor a county-wide beautification program, free sculpture shows, the preservation of local history, and the establishment of the James A. Michener Art Museum.

"It's been a great experience to donate to these charities," says Bob. "Joyce and I have truly been blessed in many ways, and The Byers' Foundation is one way of sharing these blessings with others."

QUESTIONS?

In each issue of the Caroler Chronicle we try to find interesting facts and history about the Carolers to help you to get as much enjoyment out of your Byers' Choice collection as possible. But for every question we try to answer for you, there are surely many more that we miss. So, if there are any questions that you have regarding the Carolers that you would like us to answer in our newsletter, please write them down and send them to:

Caroler Chronicle, Byers' Choice Ltd., P.O. Box 158, Chalfont, PA 18914



NEW GIFT BOX

Our new gift box for 1991 is a replica of the house Charles Dickens lived in from 1837 to 1839. During this period he wrote some of his most famous works including *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. It was also the birthplace of his second and third children.

The house which was saved from demolition in 1922 by the Dickens Fellowship has been restored. It now houses an excellent collection of Dickensian relics.

These boxes can be used to wrap, store and display with the Carolers.

RETIRED FOR 1991

At the end of each year, we must retire some of the characters that have been with us in the past. But as we say good-bye to some, we can look forward to the exciting new pieces that will be replacing them in 1992. Our list of characters that will be discontinued at the end of this year includes: The Musician playing the accordion (Musician series), the Apple Lady (first of the new Cries of London series), The Second Edition Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future, the First Edition *Happy Scrooge* (Dickens' Series), along with Working Santa and Mrs. Claus.

So, if any of these characters are members of a series that you are presently collecting, or would like to begin, this year may be your last chance to get them if you haven't already.

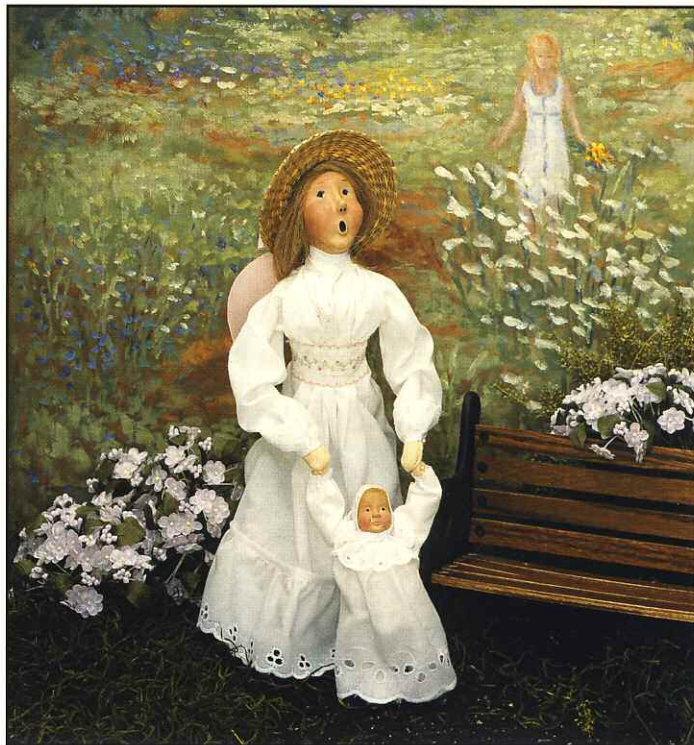




VICTORIAN MOTHER AND CHILD

For 1992, we will be introducing a Victorian Mother walking behind her infant as she helps her to take her very first steps. This piece was created in response to the many requests for Byers' Choice to continue our previous Mothers Day series. This series began in 1987 when 100 pieces were distributed throughout various stores to test the desirability of a piece to commemorate that special day. The response was overwhelming, and in 1988 Joyce designed two versions of the Mothers Day piece, both a Victorian boy and girl handing their mother a gift in gratitude. Two thousand of each design was manufactured and made available to the public. The following year a Mother, clothed in a pale blue satin dress with a cameo at her neck and pushing a baby carriage, was introduced.

Dressed in their Spring attire, the new Mother and child will make a great Mothers Day or Easter gift for any collector. She will be available in a variety of different costumes throughout next year.



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