

Byers' Choice® Ltd. *Caroler Chronicle*



Edition III, 1992

Pam Byers, Editor

RETIRED PAJAMA CHILDREN



The pajama kids were originally designed in 1984 by Byers' Choice employee Jean Gorski. They were first introduced into the Byers' Choice line in January of 1985. That year the P.J. Kids, as we affectionately called them, were dressed in many different fabrics. Teddy bear prints, stripes and small flowers were but a few of

the children's sleepwear patterns we chose to use. The kids held various objects such as candlesticks, stockings and toys. In subsequent years we settled on red cotton flannel with red trim; most of the girls held a stocking, while the boys hugged a teddy bear. The pajama kids were discontinued in 1989.

ST. MICHAELS, MARYLAND: A DIFFERENT KIND OF CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

It's mid-December and the evening air has a pleasant, frosty feeling. You're standing on a dock overlooking one of the thousands of quaint and beautiful harbors that are strung along the banks of the Chesapeake Bay like lights on a fir tree. Adding to the moon's reflection off the water are the lights of myriad boats, colorfully decked out in their Christmas finery. It's St. Michaels' annual "Harbor Boat Parade" and it's only one of the many fine ways to celebrate the season in this quintessential Chesapeake resort town.

"Christmas in St. Michaels," now in its sixth year, is a weekend packed full of holiday things to see, do and experience. Saturday starts with "Breakfast with Santa." Later on in the morning, the little ones can enjoy a parade through the middle of town featuring Santa and Mrs. Claus joined by clowns, floats and local bands. There are antique dolls and teddy bears to behold at Santa's Wonderland and a handcrafted townscape with miniature trains at the Alpine Christmas Village. Museums, an art gallery, a Christmas bazaar, gospel singers

and a walking tour of historic homes beckon too.

But as dusk settles in, all head to the harbor for a great carol sing-along. Then, with everyone gathered around, the "Parade of Lights" begins. Sailboats, workboats, powerboats—all gaily decorated for the season—proceed gracefully around St. Michaels Harbor. The evening culminates in a Christmas concert of traditional carols, songs and stories.

Many visitors then spend the night at one of St. Michaels' cozy bed and breakfasts. Sunday provides another opportunity to see the sights of "Christmas in St. Michaels" and perhaps to look over the selection of Byers' Choice "Carolers" at The Blue Swan or to do some other Christmas shopping at the many lovely shops.

"Christmas in St. Michaels" is made possible by volunteers who work year-round to help better their community. In the process, they attract thousands of guests from far and wide who help them to celebrate the spirit of Christmas. This year, "Christmas in St. Michaels" will be held December 12 and 13.



TWO NEW GIFT BOXES

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE CAROLER?

In the spring issue of the Caroler Chronicle we asked you, the collectors, to describe your favorite Caroler. The response was tremendous!! Hundreds of entries filled our mail box. In fact, we received so many wonderful entries that we plan to share more of these poems and short stories with you in future Caroler Chronicles.

THE LAMPLIGHTER

One winter afternoon along the brick sidewalks and gaslights of Boston's Beacon Hill, my favorite Caroler, "The Lamplighter," literally came to life. There, passing along the gracious nineteenth century townhouses, the lamplighter would have raised his torch to assure the joyous carolers a safe route under the glow of his lamps. His task completed, might he even join them? To my surprise, as I looked into a shop window, there was a display of carolers, heads raised in song, as if to say, yes you're right — let the "Lamplighter" light the light of Christmas for all.

Timothy Sullivan
Leominster, MA

THE GIRL ON THE ROCKING HORSE

Childhood memories come rushing back as I gently touch and put in motion "The Girl on the Rocking Horse." I'm in Grandma's attic at the top of the dimly lit staircase staring longingly through the cobwebs to the far window. There, outlined by sunlight, the rocking horse sits idle. Clutching my worn teddy for courage, I rush forward, jump aboard, start rocking and all is right in my little world.

Miriam Stauder
Orangeville, PA

A STAND-OUT FROM THE REST

Poor Marley's ghost ascends the stair
With ashen cheeks and sunken stare.
His vest and tailored suit of gray
A ghoulish mission don't betray.
His leggings black, with tasseled knees,
And lace cravat are sure to please.
But wait! His head and chin are bound;
And one can hear the ghastly sound
Of chains that clang a warning cold
'Gainst those who put their faith in gold!

Sherrill Morris
Metamora, IL

A BLONDE HAired CHILD

It was December 24, 1989, rainy and cold. I was sitting in my kitchen crying my heart out (because I was concerned for my ill mother) when I heard a knock at the door. It was my friend Marilyn with a blonde child caroler in hand. A special gift for my Mother and me to share this holiday. She made me laugh with her story. She told me the doll reminded her of herself as a child as she was a caroler and that she had come to sing carols to me this Christmas Eve morning. As she sang to me, she did not look like the caroler at all because she was dripping wet with pink rollers in her hair and she sure couldn't sing. But we shared tears and laughter at that moment, as my mother and I did that Christmas Eve night when I shared my Caroler and story with her in the hospital room. This little Caroler will always hold precious memories for me.

Mary Ann Miles
Belle Haven, VA

THE SALVATION ARMY LADY

We live on an island
Of a hundred or so.
Byers' Carolers arrive in

December
For their silent show.

Salvation Army Lady
Centers the stage;
Others render their music,
Page by page.

She wears a cape
To ward off the cold,
Hoping to fill the pot
With all the coins it will hold.

Flanked by her kettle of red,
Ringing the familiar chime,
Proudly she stands in her suit
of blue—

You know it's Christmastime.

Linda Departhy
Prudence Island, RI

THE SKATER

He skims o'er the ice,
He glides and he darts,
Skating his way
Right into my heart.

His animated face
Is especially unique
With double chin, moustache
And broad, creased cheeks.

He looks so jolly,
Energetic, and carefree—
His personality
Comes shining through to me.

And his green velour costume
Is simply divine!
So there's no denying
He's a favorite of mine.

Just to look at him
Gives my spirit a lift,
He makes me smile—
My cherished Christmas gift.

Mary Pepper
Evergreen, CO

THE PARSON

My very favorite caroler,
The one most precious to me,
Is the gentle country parson
Who sings so merrily.

You may wonder why he's special,
Why he's this buyer's choice,
It's because I've married a parson
And together, to God, we lift one voice!

Liz Eklund
Kingston, MA

MOTHER WITH CRYING BABY

December 7, 1988, my daughter called, "Mom, they have a son for us, we can pick him up right away!" I was overjoyed, but said, "Surely, you will wait and get things ready for a baby." (Their own son was now five.) "We will see," she said.

The next day she called—"Hear that? That is your newest grandson's voice."

Their gift that Christmas—"a remembrance of your newest grandson"—The Mother With The Crying Baby.

Dorothy McCormick
Mt. Pleasant, IA

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW CHRISTMAS?

Is Christmas your favorite holiday? If so, we have a real challenge for you. Below, we have put together several trivia questions for you to test your knowledge of Christmas.

(Answers appear on back cover)

- Q1. In England, what does finding a thimble in the plum pudding mean to the finder?
- Q2. What do we call round or oval candies filled with fruit preserves, or cream, and covered with chocolate?
- Q3. What carol contains the word "Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la"?
- Q4. In *A Christmas Carol*, how many years had Marley been dead and why was he forced to carry the heavy chains?
- Q5. Which state has a city named Santa Claus?
- Q6. Who wrote the original story of *The Nutcracker*?
- Q7. In what country did the Christmas tree tradition begin?
- Q8. In *The Night Before Christmas*, "I sprang from my bed" to see what?
- Q9. After killing the Mouse King, what does the nutcracker become?
- Q10. How many birds were given in *The Twelve Days of Christmas*?

AN IRISH CHRISTMAS

When you think of an Irish holiday, St. Patrick's Day springs to mind. But, as the Irish can tell you, it was this patron saint of Ireland who first brought Christmas to their land. Since the fifth century, when St. Patrick introduced the Irish to

passers-by. The bread, filled with caraway seeds and raisins, and the pitcher of milk are illuminated by a candle, usually lit by the youngest child in the family. This candle represents the Holy Child.

A more secular Irish tradition is played out on



this Christian celebration, they have kept the yuletide in a manner that reflects their steadfast devotion to the spirituality of the season.

One holiday tradition kept by the Irish and indeed shared by many other Christian nations involves placing lighted candles in each window. Some Irish folk say that these candles are meant to welcome Mary and Joseph who sought shelter on that first Christmas eve; others say that the candles are intended to show the Holy Child the way to his followers.

Perhaps more unique to Irish custom is the setting of the kitchen table with bread and milk as a show of hospitality to the Holy Family and

St. Stephen's Day, the day after Christmas. On this day young men and boys, and sometimes girls, observe an age old ritual by going from house to house wearing masks and carrying a bird made of straw. They sing and dance for a gift of pennies to feed their "starving wren." Or, in other words, to fill their own pockets.

One Christmas decoration that we equate with a traditional North American celebration has its origin in Ireland, too. The glossy-leaved holly wreath with its clusters of red berries can be traced to the early settlers from the south of Ireland who came to the United States during the potato famine.

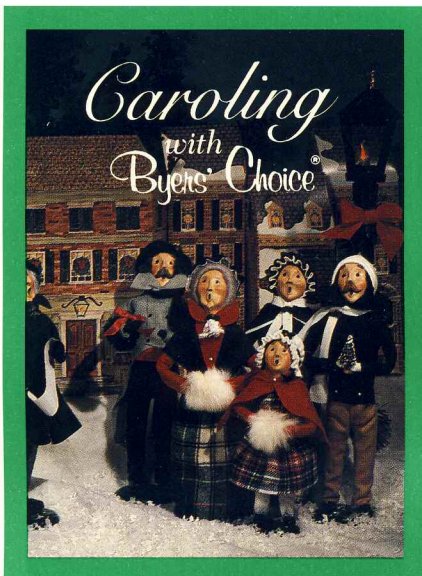


Trivia Answers

A1. Marriage in the near future. Baking various small charms, coins, etc. in the Christmas pudding was a Victorian Christmas tradition. A2. Sugarplums. A3. Deck the Halls. A4. 7. They were the chains he "forged in life" through his obsessive greed and disregard for mankind. A5. Indiana. A6. E.T.A. Hoffman. A7. Germany. The pagans in Northern Europe believed the evergreen was a symbol which indicated that the winter darkness would end and spring would return. Early Christians told the pagans the fir tree was the tree of life and represented the eternal life of Christ. A8. What was the matter. A9. A handsome prince. A10. 184. If you were to take the song literally, the breakdown would look like this: 12 partridges, 22 turtledoves, 30 french hens, 36 colly birds, 42 geese a-laying, 42 swans a-swimming.

Byers' Choice® Ltd.

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Our *NEW* Caroling Tape

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