

Byers' Choice® Ltd. *Caroler Chronicle*



Edition III, 1994

Pam Byers, Editor



The Byers' Choice Winter Wonderland

A winter wonderland created especially for Byers' Choice Ltd. Carolers® figurines is now officially open at the company's home in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. On July 15th the ribbon was cut with the Byers' family of 150 employees and over 500 avid Caroler lovers from as far away as Maine, Florida and Los Angeles.

The entrance to the gallery leads you through a cozy recreation of a 19th century parlor decorated in a festive Christmas manner. This eases you into a lively holiday scene of Carolers strolling the streets of their very own village. Here lampposts flicker to reveal the figurines peering into shop windows brimming with toys, and shopping for gifts or the fixings for the Christmas feast. Musicians are performing on one street corner, the Salvation Army band on another. The postman is handing out greeting cards and the constable can be seen in the square keeping a watchful eye on all. Of course, carolers are singing everywhere.

Strolling under an arch, you enter 19th century London. Here "A Christmas Carol" comes to life. The Fezziwigs and their guests are celebrating Christmas past in a recreation of their warehouse. The Cratchit family, observing the true meaning of Christmas in their humble, loving home, depicts the spirit of Christmas present. Scrooge wanders from counting house to graveyard and emerges on a balcony overlooking a joyful, crowded street where many happy caroling figurines are celebrating the spirit of Christmas future. [Cont'd Page 2]



Tucked in one corner of the Gallery is a small theater where guests can watch a video which tells the Byers' Choice story. Those who are interested in how the figurines are made may watch them being hand-crafted from an observation deck which offers a birds-eye view of the production area.

For visitors who are interested in the history of the early figurines, the three original figurines are on display in a glass case. Over 400 other figurines can be seen throughout the gallery. Arranged in groupings, each has his or her own story to tell. The impact of the variety of personalities and the versatility of costumes of the Byers' Choice figurines can easily be felt. But remember, only 100 of any traditional or Victorian figure has been made, therefore it is impossible for us to even begin to show an example of each one — so don't be surprised if we do not have the one that looks like your favorite.

In a New England-like setting, visitors are treated to a snowy wonderland filled with skaters frolicking on a frozen mill pond. Across the path, school children greet their teacher at the school house door. A country church makes a lovely backdrop for the children's nativity pageant and a group from the congregation is led in song by the choir director.

The final display is a favorite. A miniature Santa's workshop filled with packages and toys makes a perfect setting for Working Santa and Mrs. Claus.

The Christmas Gallery exits into the Gift Emporium with an ever-changing selection of over 200 traditional and Victorian figurines. Other gifts and accessories can also be found there.

We hope many of our Caroler figurine friends will come to visit our Christmas Gallery to gain a better understanding of the company's handcrafted-in-America story. In the first two months we have greeted over 5,000 visitors. Almost without exception, the response has been "excellent!" Expressions such as "delightful" and "amazing" are often heard. Said one Caroler figurine fan, "It is indeed Christmas 365 days a year at Byers' Choice." Our Christmas Gallery is open to the public Mon. – Sat. 10 – 4





A Bucks County Christmas

While you're in Bucks County visiting us at the Christmas Gallery, why not set your sights on some of the other holiday attractions that herald the season in the beautiful community in which we live and work. Here are three of our favorites:

The Mercer Museum in Doylestown, PA is a castle filled with treasures of our past. This one-of-a-kind National Historic Landmark, conceived and built by Henry Mercer in the early part of this century, showcases the folk art, furnishings and implements of America before the age of machines. A dazzling display of holiday trees and table settings created by area gift stores and designers is on view in the museum's Elkins Gallery from November 19 through December 4. For information, call (215) 345-0210.

Green Hills Farm in Perkasio, PA is the lush setting for the *Pearl S. Buck House*. This world-renowned author spent the last 38 years of her life living and working at her home in Bucks County. Visitors can tour her residence and office as well as enjoy a variety of cultural events throughout the year. From December 5 to 10, come hear professional storyteller Peg Smitheman read from Pearl Buck's holiday tale, "A Christmas Ghost." For information, call (215) 249-0100.

The James A. Michener Art Museum, an old stone jail transformed into a hub of artistic expression, is located in the heart of Doylestown. Here you can discover exciting exhibitions, dramatic sculptures and intimate galleries filled with the visual riches of well-known regional and national artists. For more information, call (215) 340-9800.

To obtain a complete guide to lodging, sights and events in Bucks County, phone 1-800-896-BUCKS. We hope to see you soon!



Joyce Reflects...

Why three men with their heads thrown back in song? Sometimes I wonder why I chose these figurines to make as Christmas decorations. Certainly Santas, angels or a character from the nativity scene would have been more obvious choices. Instead, the simple act of singing sparked my imagination — three old-fashioned men with voices raised to God in praise. To me, song represents the joy and sharing of the Christmas season. Perhaps this is the spirit I was hoping to capture.



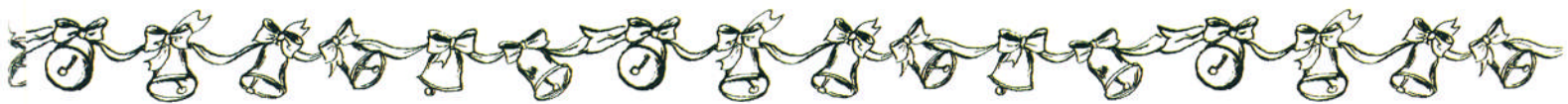
One of the questions I am asked most frequently is “Do you have a favorite caroler figurine?” My answer is always “no”, because each figurine has a uniqueness to me in the same way each person has - - I enjoy each one for its own distinctive qualities. The Traditional Carolers intrigue me most. If I were collecting, they would be the ones I would seek out.



I like to see our Traditional figurines displayed in large groups where the diversity of the characters can be seen in their faces, costumes and stances. It always makes me happy because it reminds me of the diversity of humankind and the prospects of peace and understanding among us.



In my home at Christmas I use Traditional figurines in groupings on my mantle, my sideboard, even on the kitchen windowsill. Of course, some of the specialty figurines can be incorporated into the setting, but it is the impact of the male and female, tall and short, fat and thin, young and old, Traditional figurines that make the scene most appealing.



Befana Cookies

What fun it was for us to receive this letter from Michelle Creedan, a Caroler collector in Massachusetts:

"...I have never been so excited about a new figurine until I received the last edition of your newsletter, featuring Befana, the Italian Christmas witch. When I was growing up, my grandmother made delicious cookies every time I visited. I always thought the cookie's name was 'piffana,' because that's how it sounded when she said it... When she passed away several years ago, so did the recipe. These cookies were my favorite, and reminded me of her and our visits.

"After her death, I began a search for the recipe. I visited every book shop I could find and searched through Italian and dessert cookbooks, but to no avail. No one had ever heard of the cookie, even a couple of Italian bakeries at which I inquired.

"Then came the Chronicle, with Befana on the cover. This was the name of the cookie. I again looked in a cookbook, and there was the recipe for Befana cookies. Though I haven't attempted to make them yet, I can't wait to share them with my son."

Since this letter was written, Michelle's mother located a copy of the actual recipe that her grandmother used. And it is this recipe that we would like to share with the rest of the *Caroler Chronicle* readers. Happy baking!



Befana Ingredients

Dough: 4 cups flour 2 cups sugar 6 eggs 12 oz. sweet butter (melted)	2 tbsp. shortening oil of anise 1 heaping tsp. baking powder	Filling: 3 packages ground almonds 2 egg whites 2 oz. brandy 1/2 cup sugar
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For Dough: Mix flour with baking powder - set aside. Beat together sugar and eggs, add two drops of oil of anise, melted butter and shortening, mix. Add flour mixture and knead into ball. [Set aside a small amount of dough to decorate cookie.]

For Filling: Mix two egg whites until stiff, add ground almond, brandy and sugar. Roll out dough and cut into diamond shape cookies. Place a small mound of filling in the center of each cookie. Take the extra dough and roll into long thin strands - criss cross two 2" pieces over each cookie.

Bake at 425°F until light brown.



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Traditional Caroler