



Caroler Chronicle®

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Wreathmaker

Wreaths have become such an important part of our Christmas traditions that it is difficult to find a front door without one during the last two weeks of December. History tells us that ancient cultures wore wreaths on their heads. These wreaths were often made of olive or laurel leaves and were bestowed upon athletes and other important personages. In northern Europe holly, mistletoe, ivy and other evergreens were brought into the home to shelter the sylvan spirits from the cold. Early Christians used evergreens to symbolize eternal life. Today, Advent wreaths are hung in churches. These wreaths have four candles affixed to their branches. One candle is lit each Sunday for the four Sundays preceding December 25th, the birthday of Christ.

Our *Wreathmaker* probably doesn't care very much about the history. She is interested in decorating and making certain no space is left without a wreath. Now let's see — we have one for the front door, one for over the mantel, one for the center of the table, and perhaps one to replace that picture over the sofa, and then we must have one for the kitchen with Bakerkins to help with the Christmas baking.





Kindles™

Christmas is just not Christmas without the Kindles and the fun they bring with them. These Kindles donned their Santa hats to help with the decorating. They are sure to be found all over the house. Look for them hanging from chandeliers, peeking through the branches of trees, holding napkins on the table, hiding in stockings or curled up sleeping on a wreath. If you have found an unusual way to put your Kindles to work, please let us know so that we can share your ideas with others. Check our website at www.byerschoice.com for your responses.

photo by Will & Deni McIntyre



A Christmas Carol

Returns to Byers' Choice

Last December Gerald Charles Dickens, the great-great grandson of Charles Dickens, visited Byers' Choice to perform *A Christmas Carol*. From the opening line "Marley was dead", to the closing line "God bless us, every one!" the audience sat transfixed as Mr. Dickens leaped, laughed and sobbed while he portrayed the twenty-six voices in this wonderful Christmas story.

Caroline Jackson, President of Jackson Enterprises, Inc., Mr. Dickens' management company, says "History, literature, and biography spring to life when Gerald Dickens commands the stage. He is powerful, energetic, and interactive. His spellbinding performance enthralls audiences!" We totally agree, so this year we have invited Mr. Dickens to return. He will perform at Byers' Choice on Saturday the 4th of December. There will be two shows: 3:00 pm and 7:30 pm. Following each show, Mr. Dickens will sign books, memorabilia and other gifts sold by Jackson Enterprises. If you live nearby, come meet him and enjoy his unforgettable performance. If you do not live near Chalfont, check www.jackprises.com to find performances near you. For more information or to purchase tickets for the performances at Byers' Choice, please call our Emporium at 215-822-6700.

Salvation Army

This is the celebration of The Salvation Army's 125th year in America. In 1879 Eliza Shirley, a sixteen-year-old lassie from The Salvation Army in London, moved to Philadelphia with her family. Mother and daughter found an abandoned chair factory and set about cleaning it to use it as a meeting place. Unfortunately, attendance was low, and it took a tar barrel fire in the lot next door to draw a crowd. Shirley seized the opportunity and addressed those gathered. Interest grew and after one year in America, the Shirleys had hundreds of followers. General Booth was so impressed that he sent George Scott Railton and seven "Hallelujah Lassies" to America to take charge. When you make your contribution to The Salvation Army this Christmas, don't forget to wish them a Happy Birthday.



Traditions

by Byers' Choice® Ltd.



The four Sundays preceding Christmas are observed in many churches as Advent Sundays. About a century ago, the Germans printed *Advent Calendars* to remind children of this important season. On the front of the calendars were beautiful Christmas scenes. Hidden within each scene were the numbers one through twenty-five. Behind each number was a small door. Each day a door was opened to reveal another picture, a Bible verse or a piece of candy.

Jeff has taken this tradition one step further. He designed *Advent Calendars* that are three-dimensional wooden boxes. Each has a Christmas scene on front with twenty-five small doors. Behind each door is a small compartment to hold a gift. These Advent boxes are meant to be used from one year to the next. You can choose appropriate gifts for your child depending on his or her age and interests. Some suggestions are: finger puppets, small games or toys, jewelry, tickets to a sports event or movie, gift certificates to a favorite restaurant, cookies, candies or Christmas ornaments. The list is limitless.

These *Advent Calendars* are not just for children. Joyce is having fun finding twenty-five surprises to put into a calendar for her mother.



Advent Calendar Boxes



Open House at Byers' Choice Ltd.

June 11 & 12, 2005

Mark your calendars and get an early start on your travel arrangements. Byers' Choice will be hosting an open house on the weekend of June 11th and June 12th, 2005. Over the past four years, we have had several similar events here at our factory in Chalfont, PA. Many of you will surely remember the fun we all had together in June of 2003 and how a few rain showers couldn't dampen our spirits. It was truly an unforgettable weekend. These events are always a lot of fun regardless of the weather and are a great opportunity for fans of the Carolers to meet new friends and share in a variety of activities including:

- Tours of the production floor to meet the artisans who bring the Carolers to life
- Strolls through the Christmas Museum and handcrafted Nativity Collection
- Charity silent auction of many rare and one-of-a-kind Caroler and Kindle figures from the past
- A commemorative Caroler designed to remember the event

Please be sure to set the dates aside and to be on the lookout for more information about our 2005 Event in your next Caroler Chronicle.

Lamplighter

Desmond Young wrote of Edwardian London, "If one could only hover in a balloon over Central London as night falls! To see, as the man with the long stick makes his rounds. . . the transformation scene gradually unfolds and a myriad of lights spurt out of the grey gloom beneath . . . beginning with steady white orbs and fading away in glimmering specks of yellowish luminosity – what a picture that would be!"

How charming! Mr. Young's description makes me want to step back in time to watch a lamplighter making his way from post to post to bring the warm glow of gas light to a street. He had no way of knowing that in little more than fifty years, mankind would be flying in airplanes transfixed by the scene he could only imagine, and the lamplighter with the long stick would be nothing but a memory.





St. Nicholas

While traveling through northern Europe, we happened upon a Christmas store in Regensburg, Germany. In talking with the owner, we discovered our mutual interest in the history of Christmas, and she suggested we go with her to her antique shop several blocks away where she sold her antique Christmas treasures. A beautiful handmade St. Nicholas from the 1800's caught our eye. He became the inspiration for this figure. After a year of searching for fabrics, we have done our best to recreate this treasure.

In 1988, Byers' Choice created our first *St. Nicholas*, along with his sidekick Knecht Ruprecht. St. Nicholas is the most significant Christmas figure in northern Europe.

In Holland on St. Nicholas Day, December 6th, he arrives in Amsterdam's harbor by steamer and descends the gangplank to the cheers of thousands of Dutch families gathered to greet him. To the pealing of church bells, he rides astride his white horse in a procession filled with floats, city officials and brass bands to the main square. Here he stops in front of the Royal Palace, where he is welcomed by the Queen.

St. Nicholas parties are very popular on Christmas Eve. Hot chocolate and special Christmas cookies called speculaas are enjoyed. On Christmas Eve, children place their wooden shoes on the hearth for St. Nicholas to fill.

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