

BYERS' CHOICE[®]
The Carolers
A HANDCRAFTED
CHRISTMAS TRADITION

CHRISTMAS 2009

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

HOSTING FOR THE
HOLIDAYS

CHOCOLATE!

DISPLAYING YOUR
CAROLERS

PLUS: The Story of Santa Claus,
Byers Family Christmas Traditions,
Gingerbread Houses

34



On the Cover



12 Days of Christmas

On the cover is an image of our newest member of the 12 days of Christmas series. *Seven Swans A-Swimming* followed *Six Geese A-Laying* as the newest members in 2009. Learn more about the lyrics to the song and our series inside.

8

2 Hosting for the Holiday

Joyce's Tips for Holiday Hosting Success

6 Chocolate!

The History of Chocolate

8 Twelve Days of Christmas

Meaning Behind the Song

12 Ho, Ho, Ho

The Story of Santa Claus

21 "A Christmas Carol"

A Tribute to the Great Christmas Classic

27 Gingerbread!

A Celebrated Holiday Tradition

30 Storing Your Carolers

Safely Storing Your Figurines Year Round

32 The Season of Advent

A New Twist on an Old-Time Tradition

34 Christmas at the North Pole

The Magic of Kindles™

note from joyce



It's that time of year again! A time to think about the holidays of the past. We cherish memories of traditions associated with these holidays and pass them from one generation to another. They help to make us who we are and who we will become. Traditions are the glue which bonds us to our past and our future.

For thousands of years, the end of autumn and the beginning of winter have been a time for celebration. When the harvest was completed, the

really enjoy removing their Carolers and other Christmas decorations from storage and reminiscing about the pleasant memories they evoke. Each one is special—a family member or friend, a place visited, a celebration, a tradition. The next step is to find the perfect spot for each figure. Perhaps the *Children with Stockings* and *Santa* and *Mrs. Claus* go on the mantel. The *Chef* could be in the kitchen with the Bakerkins and a gingerbread house. The figures that represent family and friends can be put on risers

**"...each Caroler has a unique personality
...this is due to the fact that each
Carolers is completely handcrafted."**

men gave thanks for the food they had gathered to sustain them through the winter. The winter solstice marked the date when days became longer with a promise of the renewal of life. Today these two celebrations have become Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Enough history—what shall we do this year to make the holidays special?

A feast with family and friends is in order. Thanksgiving offers an excuse to get out your favorite china, decorate the table, open a nice bottle of wine and cook more food than you could ever possibly eat. What fun! This year, as always, I'm decorating my table with beautiful fall leaves from my yard, a few gourds mixed with *Pilgrim* and *Native American Carolers*.

Many people have told me that Thanksgiving weekend is when they start decorating for Christmas. They

on the table inside the front door to greet guests. A few greens finish the look and they are ready to go. What could be easier?

We have been asked many times why people bond with the Carolers. I think it is because, like people, each Caroler has a unique personality. This is due to the fact that each Caroler is completely handcrafted. The collective talents of at least twelve artisans have touched each figure. The result is a special figure that speaks to you.

Wondering what to do with all of your Byers' Choice friends this holiday season? We hope this publication will give you some fresh ideas. The most important thing is to enjoy their company.

Joyce

Joyce Byers, Founder & Designer
Byers' Choice Ltd.



Holiday Hostess

NO-HASSLE HOSTING

Joyce's Tips for Holiday Hosting Success

- Start planning well in advance about the theme, guest list, food, drinks, etc.
- Make a list and follow it.
- The more guests that will be coming to your event, the simpler the menu and decorations should be.
- Don't expect your husband to be of much help unless he enjoys it.
- Consider hiring a teenager to help with coats and other tasks.
- Final decisions on food and decorations should be made at least a week in advance.
- Plan food that can be prepared and reheated in advance.
- Don't feel guilty about using prepared foods.
- The day of the party is the time for last minute details.
- Don't take on cleaning the entire house—no one will notice.
- Plan to have everything ready to go 1 hour before guests arrive.
- RELAX—take a soothing bath.
- Plan to be the first guest at your own party—arrive 15 minutes early.
- Open a bottle of wine, take a sip and enjoy yourself.
- Remember: Your guests want you to enjoy yourself and will follow your lead.



Wine Santa



Woman Selling Holiday Flowers

Taking the time to display your Carolers is not only personally rewarding, it will generate interest and enthusiasm among your friends and family.

JOYCE'S Display Tips

A trick to bring Carolers® to life is to bend them into realistic positions. The only sensitive areas are where the head and feet meet the wire armature. Otherwise the bodies and arms have been designed to be fully bendable. When creating a Caroler display, it helps to take into consideration their heights, costume colors and characters to help tell a story with the display. I like to position them as if they're gathering and interacting with one another.

Some ideas for displaying your Carolers include: attaching Carolers to garland on top of doorways; clustering them on top of mantels with greenery, pine cones, and ribbon; or nestling a few of them into evergreen swags or wreaths. A hallway table or nightstand is the perfect place to add a touch of holiday spirit with a simple Caroler display.

Another idea is to use Carolers to decorate your Christmas tree. You can decorate the tree just using Carolers, ribbons, garland, and bows to help embellish the display. Artificial trees and wreaths work well because you can use the wired branches to wrap around and hold the Carolers in

place. If you put a candle in your window at Christmas, adding a Caroler and some greenery can make a warm and wonderful window display.

Use Carolers as the focal point for a centerpiece on the holiday table. Place a wreath in the center of the table and position the Carolers in the middle of the wreath keeping in mind that they should relate to each other or tell a story. You can spray artificial snow on the wreath and weave festive ribbons through the arrangement. Remember that, as the centerpiece it will be viewed from all sides, you should position the Carolers facing out in all directions so that everyone can see them.

For those who might like to incorporate a family heirloom, you can use platters, plates, bowls, or candle holders to enhance your display. A few branches of evergreens and holly placed around the figures and tied with flowing red ribbons that cascade onto the table will surely help create that wonderful Christmas spirit.

Be sure to keep your displays out of the sun if possible, as prolonged exposure to the sun will bleach the colors in the faces and fabrics.

Keep in mind that these displays will be more successful if you use an odd number of Carolers, vary the height of the figures, and try to contrast the color and texture of clothing as much as possible. Accessories like the picket fence, lamppost, or fireplace displayed in the right grouping of Carolers can add warmth and charm to any area.



A display riser will create different heights in your Caroler vignettes.
20.5"W x 12.5"D x 14"H



Victorian Carolers



Coachman



Some say for a true test of strength, use your bare hands to break a chocolate bar into several pieces, then try to eat just one.

chocolate!

It probably comes as no big surprise that the greatest quantity of chocolate is consumed in winter. Hot cocoa is naturally the drink of choice after a big snowball fight or a few runs down the sledding hill, and what Christmas stocking is truly filled unless it contains some of the children's favorite chocolate candy! And we surely indulge in more chocolate during winter because of its uplifting effect on our spirits. Scientists say these happy feelings may be caused by the chemical effects of chocolate on our brains or by our association of chocolate with pleasant past events, say, of when grandma passed around that special box of chocolates after Christmas dinner each year.

This year we decided that a pairing of chocolates and Carolers® might truly up the happiness quotient. As a proud Pennsylvania company, we were glad to learn that Pennsylvania runs a close second to California in the production of cocoa and chocolate, and Hershey's is just the tip of the chocolate kiss, so to speak. There are many smaller chocolate makers in our state and perhaps that is because, historically, the Pennsylvania colony of the 18th century was a prime site for the making of chocolate.

The first chocolate was introduced to the American colonies in 1755, but it only took another ten years before chocolate manufacturers came on the scene. And while in Europe chocolate remained a treat for the aristocracy for quite some time, in America it was instantly a treat for the masses and, as a drink, rivaled coffee and tea in popularity.

Molded chocolate did not appear on the scene until the late 1880's. The first chocolate molds were made of metal and included extensive realistic-looking details that made the finished product quite delicate. These chocolate sculptures were often sold together with fabric, wood or paper accessories that made the figures even more artful.

For this year, we've decided that it's time for the Carolers themselves to be accessorized with chocolate (or at least a realistic-looking representation of chocolate) in the form of molded dark chocolate Santas with painted-on white chocolate beards and fur trim. So we hope you'll indulge in both Carolers and chocolate this Christmas, they both go so well with the season! ❄️

Chocolate Tasting 101

First, admire the beautiful colors on the foil-wrapped chocolate Santa. Now, quick, tear off the foil and bite off the head. (It shouldn't be too hard, it's probably hollow.) Chew and swallow before attacking the midsection. Wait...that's probably what you've been doing all your life, and while it surely gives you great pleasure, maybe you really haven't been truly appreciating the incredible flavors in all of that chocolate you've been consuming over the years.

So, now, take just a small piece of chocolate off that Santa (about the size of a peanut). Put it in your mouth and let it sit on your tongue. Because chocolate melts at a temperature very close to our own body temperature, it won't be long before the solid piece of chocolate becomes soft and oozy. When it seems mostly liquefied, put your tongue against the roof of your mouth and then quickly pull it away, making a soft popping noise that will disperse all of those flavor molecules that are trapped inside. Yummm! Repeat ad infinitum. If you take your time to savor each morsel with this professional tasting method, you might actually make that chocolate Santa last until next Christmas. Oh, all right, enough taking it slow, bite off that tree he's holding in his right hand, you know you want to!



Chocolatier's Apprentice & Chocolatier, Traditional Family with Chocolates

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



The origins of the Twelve Days of Christmas Song is believed to date back to Medieval French troubadours. The twelve days begin on December 25th and end on January 6th (The Epiphany). This period represents the cycle of birth to baptism. The lyrics to the song that we sing today were first published in England by J.O. Helliwell in 1842.

It is thought the gifts in the song were symbols used to help children learn the tenets of their faith. Here is one interpretation that we have heard:



Six Geese A-Laying



Seven Swans A-Swimming

MEANING BEHIND THE SONG

The Partridge in a Pear Tree: Jesus Christ

Two Turtledoves: The Old and New Testaments

Three French Hens: Faith, Hope and Love

Four Calling Birds: The Four Gospels

Five Gold Rings: First Five Books of the Old Testament

Six Geese a-Laying: The Six Days of Creation

Seven Swans a-Swimming: Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Eight Maids a-Milking: The Eight Beatitudes

Nine Ladies Dancing: Nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Ten Lords a-Leaping: Ten Commandments

Eleven Pipers Piping: Eleven Faithful Apostles

Twelve Drummers Drumming: The Twelve Points of Doctrine in the Apostles Creed

The "true love" in the song refers to God Himself. And the "me" receiving the gifts is every Christian.

The song's gifts are hidden meanings to the teachings of the Christian faith while the "true love" is symbolic of God.



The Twelve Days of Christmas is probably the most misunderstood part of the church year. Contrary to popular belief, these are not the twelve days before Christmas, but in most of the Western Church are the twelve days from Christmas until the beginning of Epiphany.

*Christmas is come,
hang on the pot,*

*Let spits turn round,
and ovens be hot;*

*Beef, pork, and poultry,
now provide*

*To feast thy neighbors
at this tide;*

*Then wash all down
with good wine and beer;*

*And so with mirth
conclude the Year.*

Virginia Almanac
(Royle) 1765



2009 Colonial Christmas Family

Williamsburg[®]

Byers' Choice Ltd. has been creating custom Carolers[®] for Colonial Williamsburg for more than a decade. Over the years, Joyce has been able to draw wonderful inspiration from this historic treasure. The holiday feast inspired this year's family. The tradition of enjoying good food and drink during the Christmas season certainly dates back to colonial times. A holiday dinner during that period could have included any number of entrees from beef and goose to ham or turkey.

On December 6th, Colonial Williamsburg celebrates the Holiday season with a fireworks display to begin the Grand Illumination. December is a wonderful time of year to visit Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area with all of the houses along Duke of Gloucester Street decorated with natural fruits and greens. To see a schedule of events and to plan a trip, you can visit their website: www.history.org/holidays. *

CREATIVE *decorating* WITH THE CAROLERS

*Arrange a few of your favorite
Christmas Carolers and some
greens to create a showpiece for
the mantel or in your foyer.*



Start with a focal point.



Add other figures to the display.



Other accessories add contrast.



Finish with lots of greens.



Above: Red Velvet Santas Right: Crimson Clauses

HO, HO, HO

No other repeated syllable has the recognition of this one or inspires the same joyous reaction among children of all ages. Little ones everywhere find the prospect of a visit from Santa Claus to be awe-inspiring, and they are willing to exhibit their best behavior for weeks before the big night.

The character, Santa Claus, is derived from old-age stories about an early Christian saint named Nicholas and from the Norse god Odin. Immigrant settlers brought Father Christmas or Saint Nicholas to the United States. His name was gradually changed to Santa Claus, from the Dutch name for the 4th century Father Christmas, which is Sinter Claas.

But where did Mrs. Claus come from? Santa Claus' wife made her debut in 1899 in "Santa Claus on a Sleigh Ride," one of a set of thirty-two books by Katharine Lee Bates, composer of "America the Beautiful." *



Folk Art Santas

“his eyes—how they twinkled;
his dimples how merry...
he had a broad face and a little
round belly, that shook, when he
laughed like a bowlful of jelly....”



Gifts From the Heart

As many of our favorite Christmas pastimes come from Victorian England, the tradition of exchanging gifts on Christmas Eve and Day began during this era. Gift giving wasn't what it is today. In many cases, the greeting card was prized as a gift and was usually framed or kept as a token of Christmases past. It was more likely that the wealthy exchanged store-bought gifts; but for the most part, it was a Christmas letter or a piece of sheet music, flowers or a handmade gift that made the most gracious gift of all. *



Cole Kindle, Flake Bakerkin, Rock Candy Chimney Gingerbread House, Gingerbread Santa, Ginger Bakerkin

COOKIES FOR CLAUS?

Christmas cookies are fun to make and certainly fun to eat. They are also a part of the holiday magic as children leave Christmas cookies out for Santa.

All around the world, children practice the tradition of leaving Christmas cookies out for Santa Claus on Christmas Eve. As the myth goes, Santa gets hungry flying around all over the world delivering Christmas gifts to all the good boys and girls and he needs a snack.

What are some other snacks that Santa might enjoy on Christmas Eve?

- Fruit (carrots for the reindeer!)
- Chocolate Candies
- Hot Chocolate
- Mince Pie
- Porridge
- Biscuits



Chocolate Santa



Milk & Cookies on Table
6"H

**Do you know
that the most popular cookie
kids leave for Santa
is the Oreo®?**

“Farm Fresh Eggs for Sale”

If you were to walk down the back streets of eighteenth century London, you would surely be introduced to some unfamiliar sights and sounds, not to mention some unusual smells. Of the many interesting characters that you would come across, one group of individuals that would be hard to miss would be the street peddlers known as “The Cries of London.” These wandering sellers would offer

countless goods and services from fresh foods and vegetables to chimney cleaning and knife sharpening. Without a storefront to sell their goods, the Cries were relegated to wandering the streets either carrying baskets or pushing carts filled with any and every product imaginable. They were given the name “Cries” because of the way they would sing songs to draw attention to themselves and their offerings.

Long before the days of refrigeration, people would make daily visits to the market to purchase food for the day. You can imagine this woman enlisting the help of her two children to gather the farm fresh eggs from the hen house before heading into the city to sell them to passersby. *

2009 Cries of London: Woman Selling Fresh Eggs, Girl with Nest, Boy with Rooster



Chef with Bread, Chef with Cake Mold, Chef with Wine

Pairing Wine & Cheese

First, determine the type of wine you will drink. The cheese you choose is dependent upon the type of wine you choose. Stronger cheeses should be paired with stronger wines, such as Bordeaux or Cabernet. Lighter cheeses are best paired with delicate wines such as a Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio. Be sure to include some fresh bread and fruit to make your meal complete.

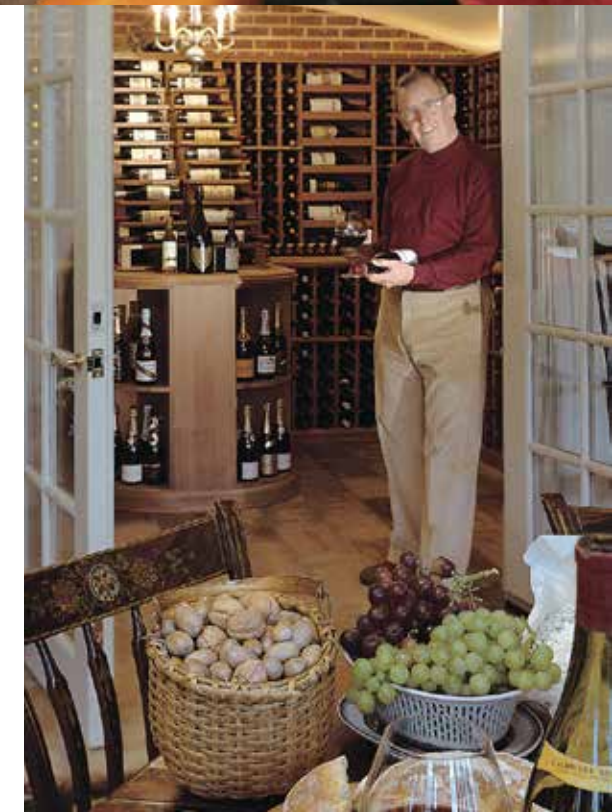
Dry White Wines (Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc)—Fresh

Mozzarella, Brie, Gouda, Baby Swiss and Mild Cheddar Cheeses

Sweet White Wines (Riesling, Muscat)—Fontina, Roquefort and Provolone

Spicy Wines (Zinfandel, Syrah, Shiraz and Pinot Noir)—Smoked Gouda, Gorgonzola, Havarti, Gruyere, Smoked Swiss or Smoked Cheddar

Champagne—Triple Crème Cheese such as Boursin, Cambozola and Explorateur

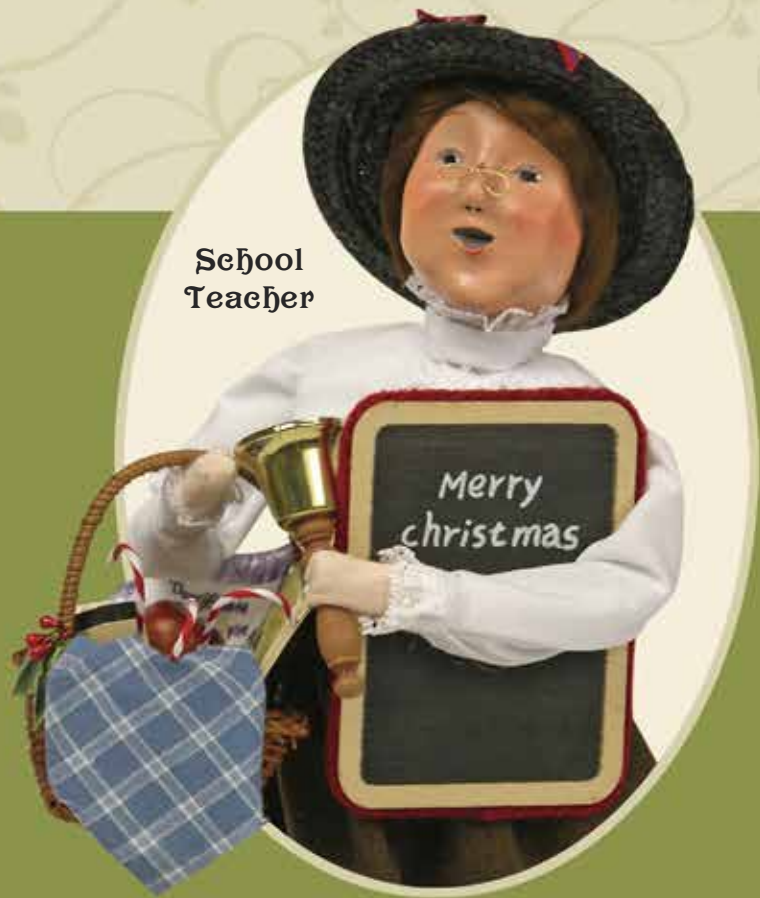




Parson



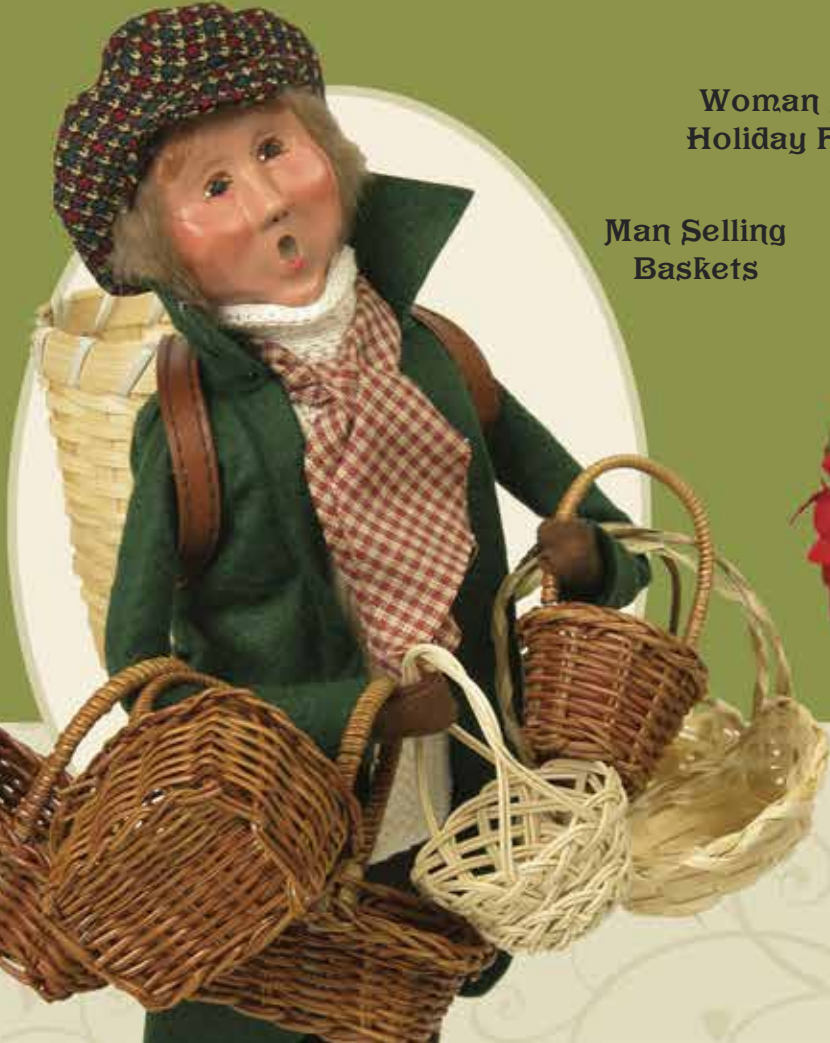
Man with
Candlesticks



School
Teacher



Clock
Maker

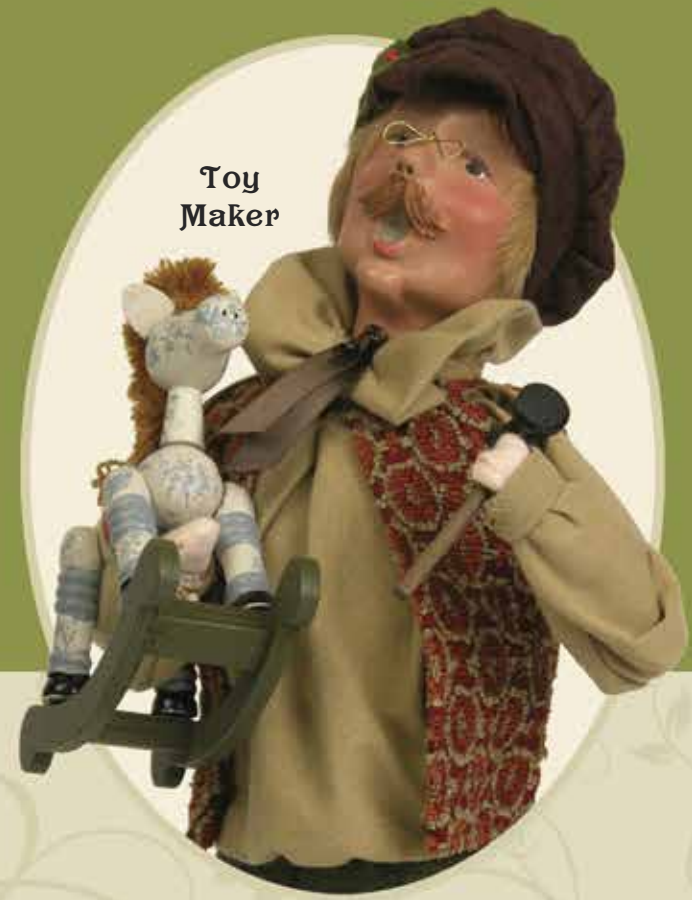


Woman Selling
Holiday Flowers

Man Selling
Baskets



Coachman



Toy
Maker



Family with Christmas Stockings

Stockings Were Hung by the Fire with Care

In the olden times, socks were not a common item that would pile up in the hamper. Many folks had only a single pair that they would take great care to wash nightly and hang up by the fire to dry overnight.

The idea of using footwear to collect gifts probably originates in Dutch tradition where children were encouraged to leave their wooden shoes outside the doors on St. Nicholas Eve in hopes of being rewarded with a present for good behavior.

In 18th Century England, it was not uncommon for a child to receive a gift of an apple, orange or some nuts in their stocking on Christmas morning.

As the tradition has grown, so have the sizes of the stockings as well as the presents that are left inside of them. *



GERALD DICKENS
Great-great grandson of Charles Dickens
2009 PERFORMANCES

November 28, 2009; 2PM & 7PM

November 29, 2009; 2PM & 6PM

Blaxton's Hall - Sutton, MA
Vaillancourt Folk Art: 508-476-3601
www.valfa.com/dickens

November 30, 2009; 1PM & 6PM

Yankee Candle Village - S. Deerfield, MA
413-665-1277 | www.yankeecandle.com

December 1, 2009; 3PM & 7PM

Stephen Anthony's Restaurant
- Marlborough, MA
Wayside Country Store: 508-481-3458
www.waysidecountrystore.com

December 2, 2009; 4PM & 7:30PM

Christmas Dove - Barrington, NH
603-664-7712
www.christmasdove.com/highlights.htm

December 3, 2009; 1PM & 7PM

Crowne Plaza Hotel - Nashua, NH
Fortin Cage: 603-882-3371
www.nhflowers-gifts.com

December 4, 2009; 4PM & 8PM

December 5, 2009; 4PM & 8PM
Park Avenue Christian Church
- New York, NY
www.parkavenuechristian.com/concerts

December 6, 2009; 3PM & 7PM

December 7, 2009; 3PM & 7PM

The Hotel Hershey - Hershey, PA
www.DiningInHershey.com

December 8, 2009; 7PM

December 9, 2009; 2:30PM

Williamsburg Inn - Williamsburg, VA
1-800-HISTORY

December 10, 2009; 5:30PM

Ebenezer Baptist Church - Occoquan, VA
The Golden Goose: 703-494-4964
www.goldgoose.com

December 11, 2009; 7PM

December 12, 2009; 1PM
Byers' Choice Ltd. - Chalfont, PA
215-822-6700 | www.byerschoice.com

December 12, 2009; 7PM

Villa Victoria Academy - Trenton, NJ
609-406-7400 x5546
www.foundationforstudentachievement.org

December 13, 2009; 1PM & 5PM

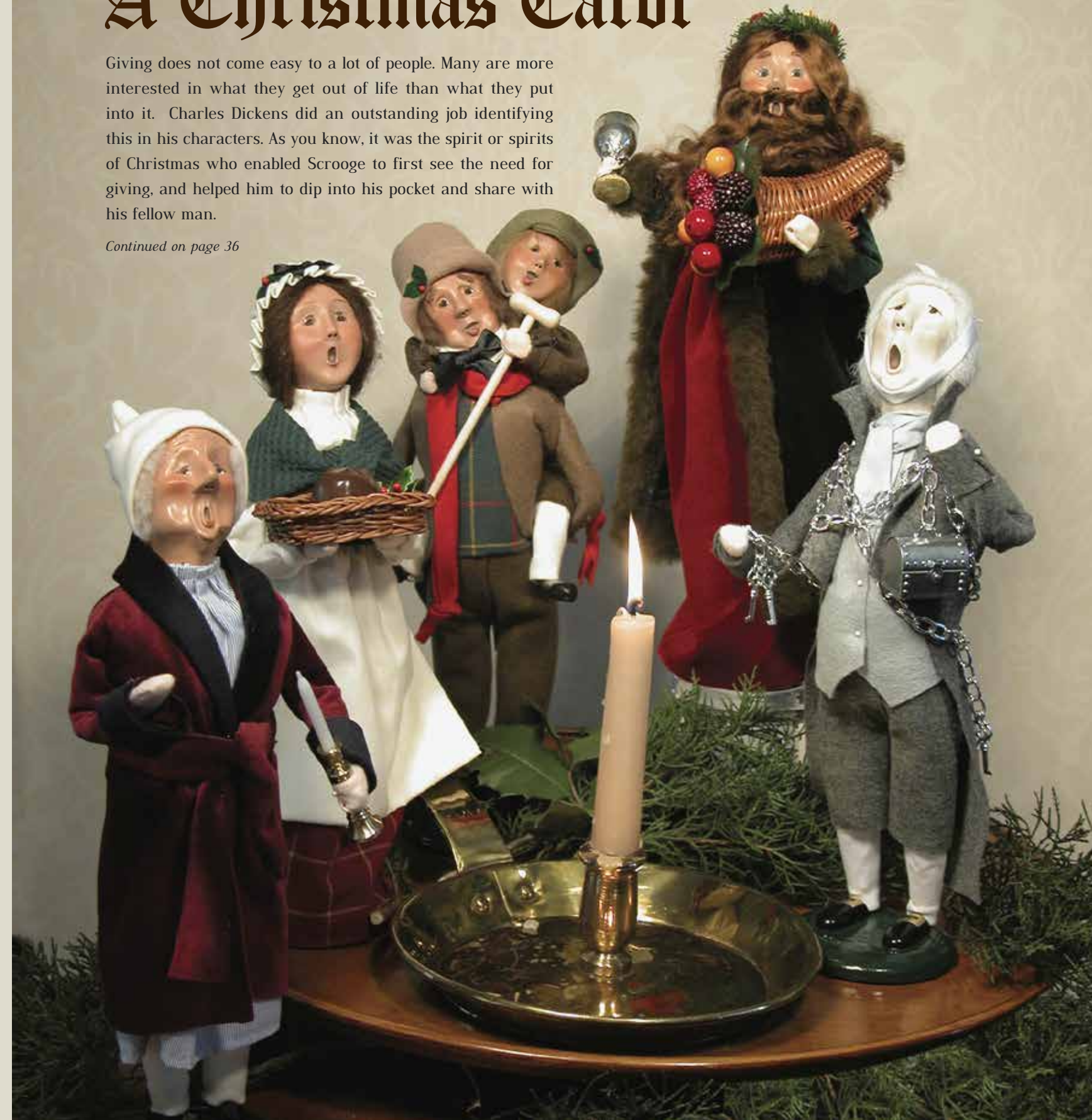
Foy Hall, Moravian College - Bethlehem, PA
Moravian Book Shop: 610-866-5481
www.moravianbookshop.com

Joyce hoped that this series of Carolers would encourage people to read "A Christmas Carol" and think about the joy that comes from giving and sharing.

A Christmas Carol

Giving does not come easy to a lot of people. Many are more interested in what they get out of life than what they put into it. Charles Dickens did an outstanding job identifying this in his characters. As you know, it was the spirit or spirits of Christmas who enabled Scrooge to first see the need for giving, and helped him to dip into his pocket and share with his fellow man.

Continued on page 36



LET IT SNOW

Who made the first snowman?

Legend has it that the first snowman was made in Eau Claire, Wisconsin back in 1809 by Vernon N. Paul and his nine-year-old daughter. According to Mr. Paul, the snowman was intended to scare away the Boxing Day elves. In no time, this creative form of snow sculpture spread through the town and then the country. Over the next 50 years, the art of snowman building was perfected by young children everywhere that sticky white snow could be found.

As time went by, more creativity was directed in outfitting our snowy friends. Coal as well as stones were used to make eyes and buttons. Old hats and scarves were wrapped around the figures to keep them from getting too cold on a winter night. Sticks would be commonly used to make the arms and a bright orange carrot would make the perfect nose. *



Boy & Girl Building Snowman



Marshmallow candy dates back to ancient Egypt where it was a honey-based candy flavored and thickened with the sap of the root of the Marsh-Mallow plant.



SHARING & CARING

The inspiration for Joyce's Carolers comes from many places. She might be inspired by a face she sees in the grocery store or in church. Other times, she is inspired by stories and traditions. Sometimes the inspiration comes when Joyce is asked by a charity or other organization to design a figure to commemorate a special event or milestone.

The charity closest to the Byers' hearts is the Salvation Army. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of each of the Caroler figurines in the Salvation Army line goes to this organization that provides help and support to so many needy people around the world.

In 1992, the Salvation Army gave Byers' Choice permission to design a line of figurines representing Salvation Army members. Joyce introduced the line beginning with the Salvation Army Woman with Kettle on the 100th anniversary of the Salvation Army's trademark red kettle symbol. Since then, Joyce has created more than a dozen



figures in the series. Licensing fees and additional contributions from the Byers go to support the work of the Salvation Army, which ministers to the physical and spiritual needs of anyone requiring its help. And the Byers hope these figures will inspire others to join in the Army's spirit of caring and sharing.

The Salvation Army Woman with Soup Pot is the newest addition. No Salvation Army scene would be complete without a Salvation Army band. A female character dressed

in the distinctive blue and red of the army calls attention to the red donation kettle by ringing her bell. A male companion, dressed in matching colors plays the tuba while a younger member stands holding a Bible.

In 1995, Bob and Joyce Byers were invited to attend the Salvation Army School for officer training graduation where they were named the first two Samuel Logan Brengle fellows. At the ceremony, they were cited for their service to the army as volunteers for their annual giving, Christian witness, and for the establishment of two full perpetuating

cadet scholarships for the school of officer training.

"We have been incredibly impressed by the Salvation Army's dedication to its work of serving Christ and helping mankind," says Bob. It has had a profound impact on the way the Byers have chosen to run their business."

The Order of Samuel Logan Brengle fellows is

named for a man who dedicated his life to the work of the Salvation Army. In the early 1900s Brengle rose through the ranks of the Army to become a mentor to the Salvation Army leaders around the world. This fellowship was established "to honor those who make significant contributions to the enhancement of the training of officers in the eastern US territories."

Since 1992, Byers' Choice has raised over a million dollars in support of the Salvation Army and their many worthy causes. *



Victorian Family in Green & Gold

Christmas Wouldn't be the Same without Carols

Christmas just wouldn't feel like Christmas without singing a few carols either at church, on the doorstep of surprised friends and family members, or even in the car when your favorite carol comes on the radio. We know these songs by heart and they bring back wonderful holiday memories each time they're heard and sung.

The carol, as a religious song for a particular season, dates back to the 13th century but didn't gain widespread popularity until the following century. Over the next hundred years, the carol developed musically and as a literary form in its own right. The Reformation in England replaced the carol with the metrical Psalm, but carols had a resurgence in the 18th century which has helped them to become the sine qua non of the Christmas season. *



Hark! The Herald Angels Sing— Hymn written in 1739 by Charles Wesley while listening to church bells one Christmas day.

The First Noel— First published in 1833 when it appeared in "Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern," a collection of seasonal carols put together by William B. Sandys.

O Holy Night— On Christmas Eve 1906, Canadian inventor Reginald Fessenden played the popular carol on an AM radio station, making it the first piece of music broadcast on radio.

What Child is This?— Written in 1865 by William Chatterton Dix while he was on bed rest, recovering from a serious illness. The hymn was put to the traditional English melody, "Greensleeves."

Silent Night— Has been translated into over 300 languages and dialects.

O Come, All Ye Faithful— Written by John Francis Wade, a Roman Catholic who fled France during the Jacobean rebellion and worked as a music teacher in England.

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen— Sung for centuries before being first published in Britain in 1833. The story goes that the carol was sung to the gentry by town watchmen who earned additional money during the Christmas season.

Angels We Have Heard on High— Originally a traditional French carol known as "Les Anges dans nos Campagnes," which translates literally to "The Angels in our Countryside."

Away in a Manger— First printed anonymously in the Lutheran book, Little Children's Book for Schools and Families in 1885.

O Little Town of Bethlehem— Written by Rev Phillips Brooks a Philadelphian vicar, after a horseback ride from Jerusalem to Bethlehem where he helped at Midnight Mass, in 1867.

Top 10 Traditional Christmas Carols

“the Christmas cookies were a subject unto themselves...hostess fell short unless she presented a tray with at least a dozen different types of cookies...”



Traditional Family with Gingerbread

MAKING GINGERBREAD

A bowl of molasses, a dipper of milk
A dash of butter, and flour like silk
Ginger and the hen's fattest egg
Vanilla extract, sprinkled nutmeg...

Joyce Remembers: Christmas at Grandmother's

When I was a child, the highlight of Christmas Day was gathering with the family at my grandparents' farm. Four generations would join under one roof to exchange gifts and share food. Although gifts were rather modest—every year my grandmother gave each of the men a pair of black socks—the food was extraordinary.

The meal began with fruit cocktail made from fruits of the farm, either canned or stored in the root cellar.

Delicious bread was baked by my Aunt Ann. Three meats were served: turkey, ham, and game. There would be sweet and mashed potatoes and several vegetables. Succotash would always be served. Since my grandparents were Pennsylvania Dutch, seven sweets and seven sour were also on the menu. These sweets and sour included things like chow-chow, red beet eggs, and pickled watermelon rind. Of course, there was always dessert—homemade ice cream and cakes and pies. The Christmas cookies were a subject unto themselves. A Christmas

hostess fell short unless she presented a tray with at least a dozen different types of Christmas cookies. Each family had its favorites, but the variety was essential. This feast was prepared on a wood burning stove, leaving the modern gas range sitting quietly by.

I loved my grandmother's Christmas tree because it twinkled with hand-blown glass balls and hand-painted animal ornaments, lights with bubbles, and ornaments made by my mother and her sisters years before. *

Ashlyn Byers' Top 10 Favorite Christmas Cookies

1. Candy Cane Sugar Cookies
2. Snickerdoodles
3. Peanut Butter Cookies with Chocolate Kisses
4. Linzer Cookies
5. Gingerbread Men
6. Almond Biscotti
7. Thumbprint Cookies
8. Oatmeal Raisin Cookies
9. Russian Tea Cake
10. Chocolate Truffles



There's probably not a single aroma that says "Christmas" more than the smell of fresh gingerbread baking in the oven.

This ancient cake made with exotic flavors like cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, allspice and, of course, ginger is synonymous with the holidays. And not only does it make a sweet treat to eat, but its sturdy constitution makes it ideal for the creation of all kinds of shapes...even entire houses!

The gingerroot, whose intense flavor is at the heart of gingerbread, was introduced to Europeans in the eleventh century. When the English began adding bread crumbs to mixtures of boiled ginger and sugar the Western world saw its first forerunners of the gingerbread we know today.

By the 1300's there is evidence of the use of gingerbread to create castles, towers and battlements. Also, ladies might make and decorate gingerbread for their knights. Colored sugars and icings were often used to make these confections quite elaborate.

The discovery of the New World in the 17th century introduced Europeans to a novel form of sweetener—molasses. When this byproduct of sugar cane processing was added to the dough, gingerbread became even more like we know it today.



Gingerbread Peppermint Tree
9.5" High

THE DOUGH

Ingredients

- 6 cups all purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves or allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 sticks (12 Tbsp) butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups packed light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup dark molasses
- 1 Tbsp water

Directions

- Whisk together the dry ingredients in a large bowl, set aside.
- Using an electric mixer, beat on medium speed the butter and brown sugar until fluffy and well blended. Beat in the eggs, molasses and water until well combined.
- Beat half of the flour mixture into the molasses mixture until well blended and smooth. Stir in the remaining flour. Knead (or use your mixer's dough hook) until well blended. If dough is too soft, add a little more flour.
- Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least two hours, preferably overnight. You can make it up to 3 days ahead of time. Let sit at room temperature for at least 10 minutes before rolling out.



Our own modern recipe for gingerbread appears on these pages and here are a few extra tips to help you construct the gingerbread house of your dreams.

- Use templates made out of light cardboard to create the perfect shapes.
- Be sure to chill your dough before rolling and cutting it. Be generous with the flour on your cutting board—a pastry brush will help you whisk away any excess.
- Cutting the dough with a pizza or pastry wheel rather than a knife will keep the shapes in their best form.
- Make sure you bake the gingerbread to a hard, deep brown, otherwise your house is sure to sag or fall apart once all of the icing and decorative elements are added.

- Create royal icing to hold all of your architectural elements together. Many recipes can be easily found online. This icing made mostly of egg white and confectioners' sugar should not be too runny.
- Once you've used the royal icing "mortar" to connect your pieces, prop them up or otherwise support them during drying. And don't forget to put the roof on last, after everything else has gotten a chance to set up first.

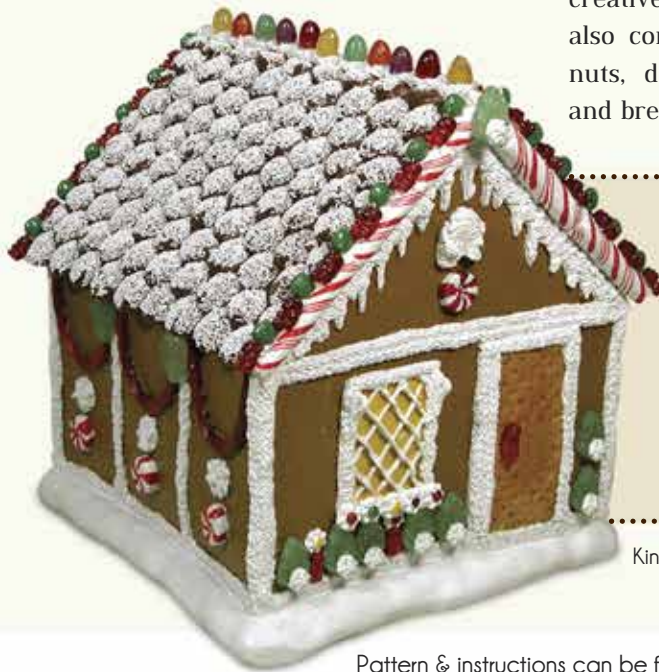
- If you're not considering eating your creation, you could even use beans, oats, rice and spices as decorations. There are probably plenty of textures and colors in your pantry already, so you don't need to go out and spend too much.

And finally, enjoy making your gingerbread house together with the whole family...it's the creation of a fun shared memory that will be the "royal

The Brothers Grimm made the gingerbread house famous in the popular fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel."

- As far as decorations go, think creatively! In addition to candies, also consider using chewing gum, nuts, dried fruits, pretzels, chips and breakfast cereals.

icing" that holds you all together through the years! Good luck, happy decorating and most importantly, have a Merry Christmas!



Kindle Cottage 11"W x 11"D x 12"H

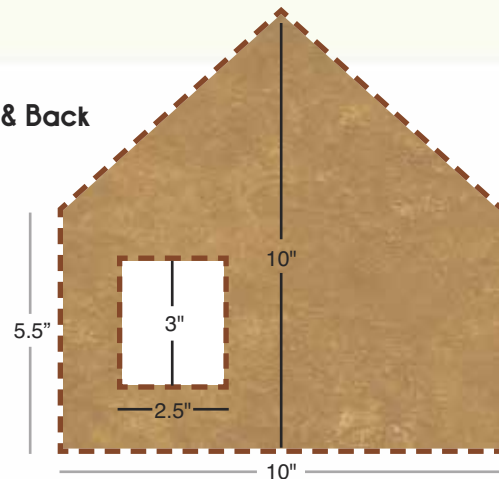
Royal icing will hold your house together. If you do not plan on eating your creation, painted wood or foam board with a bit of glue will work as brick and mortar. Gingerbread houses are easy to construct and the entire family can join in the fun!



Pattern & instructions can be found online: www.byerschoice.com/projects

You can make your gingerbread house as simple or as elaborate as you'd like! Cut out a few windows on the front and sides and outline with icing and candies. Graham crackers make a great front door! Nonpareils are perfect for shingles on the roof—see our Kindle Cottage pictured above for inspiration!

Front & Back



Arranging a Traditions™ Gingerbread House with a Bakerkin Kindle™ is a quick and easy Christmas display for the dining or family rooms. Some fresh greens and wrapped peppermints complete the vignette!



Pictured Right: Chocolate Shutter Chalet 10"W x 15"D x 10"H

Candy Suggestions:

- Christmas Hard Candies
- Tootsie Rolls®—make a log pile!
- Chuckles® Jelly Candies
- Red and Green Gumdrops
- Pretzels—make a good fence
- Cinnamon Candies
- Starlight Mints
- Candy Canes
- M&M's®
- Necco® Wafers
- Chocolate Nonpareils
- Large Marshmallows
- Ice Cream Cones for Trees
- Cereal for the Roof



13"H Candy Cane Trees

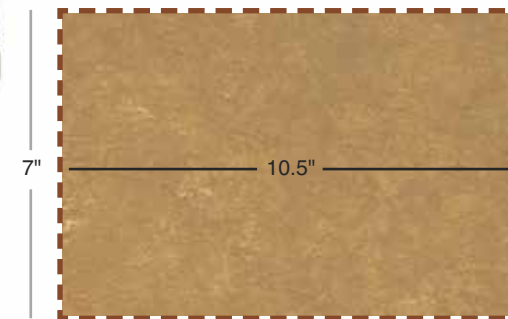


Rock Candy Chimney Gingerbread House 13"W x 18"H x 9"D

Assembling and decorating a gingerbread house is one of the sweetest traditions of the season!



Shortbread Cookie Chalet 12"W x 10"H x 12"D



Roof (2)



Side (2)

PROPERLY STORING YOUR CAROLERS®

The Byers' Choice artists carefully craft each Caroler from clay, wire, fabric and tissue paper. As each Caroler becomes a member of your family, it is important to follow a little bit of "preventative medicine" in order to keep them all healthy:



Caroler Condo

Avoid damp areas when storing your characters. High humidity can cause metal parts and accessories to rust or can increase mold on some fabrics. If one of your Carolers does get wet, blot away any excess water and dry it with a blow drier on the lowest setting.

It's a good idea to keep your Carolers safely stored well out of reach of any inquisitive furry friends. Cats and dogs have been known to be attracted to some of the materials in Carolers and to chew them up. Mice are also attracted to the Carolers and find that their tissue paper bodies make great material for nest building. If you wrap your Carolers in tissue paper when storing them, adding a few moth balls to the packing box will help keep rodents away.

Avoid storing your Carolers in cedar as the wood has been known to dissolve some paints. Also avoid displaying them in bright sunlight—prolonged exposure will fade the clothing and face paint. *

It's a good idea to keep your Carolers safely stored well out of reach of any inquisitive furry friends.



It is important to store the Carolers in a standing position. Our House Gift Boxes are specifically designed for the figures and perfect for this. This year we've also introduced the "Caroler Condo" which is a folding box that can hold up to twelve figures.



Byers' Choice makes over 36 breeds of cats and dogs. Visit www.byerschoice.com to find your favorite pet!



BYERS FAMILY CHRISTMAS

When Bob and I began to establish our own Christmas Traditions, they were modest. We purchased our first tree at an everything-must-go-sale on Christmas Eve. Just two days later, the tree fell over and broke the few balls we had hung on it.

We have never put an emphasis on gifts. Frequently the children were given gift IOU's of family participation, such as tickets to a magic show or a Sunday visit to the Franklin Institute. As the boys grew, we began to celebrate Christmas as it would have been celebrated in other countries. We would eat a typical Christmas meal from that country as well as exchange gifts following its traditions.

Gift giving in our family has remained symbolic. More recently, each adult family member and guest brings a wrapped gift, with a value of not more than 50 dollars.

The gift needs to be carefully selected because it has to be a suitable present for everyone in attendance. After the meal, we gather around the tree and take turns selecting from the stack of wrapped packages without knowing who brought what. Over the years it has been great fun to see how creative we can be!

Our Christmas tree is a family treasure. Ornaments from years of family trips and vacations are hung on the branches. Camels brought back from Egypt hang next to Wedgwood from England. Also, many of the ornaments have been made by us or our crafty friends. Redware animals and tin angels, glass-etched snowflakes and quilted squares share branches with paper ornaments that Bob and Jeff made in the Boy Scouts. A long home-made garland of threaded popcorn adds the finishing touch! *





Christmas Tree Advent Calendar

For generations, families have marked the coming of Christmas in a variety of ways. From simple chalk markings to lighting candles, families have employed unique ways to enjoy counting each of the 24 days before Christmas. The first printed calendar was produced in the 1800s by Gerhard Lang in Germany and consisted of miniature colored pictures that were then attached to a piece of cardboard for each day in December.

Advent Calendars can be found everywhere Christmas is celebrated and have been made with many different themes. The traditional ones are still a paper/cardboard piece with a small treasure behind the doors. The treasures can range from a beautiful miniature religious picture, perhaps a little wooden toy or even a piece of candy (sure to cause problems when there is more than one child in the household).

Traditions by Byers Choice® Ltd. has produced a traditional Advent calendar that combines the customs of the past with a new twist that is sure to please. The Traditions' Advent Calendar is thoughtfully designed with 24 numbered doors. Behind each numbered door, there is room for a small surprise for each day. Imagine the excitement and joy the calendar creates in your home as the young ones find toy cars, sweets, jewelry and other small gifts each day until Santa arrives! The wooden calendars can be used year after year providing a tradition that your family is sure to treasure. ✱

Countdown to Christmas

The Traditional Advent Calendar

It's never too late to start a tradition like this for your family, one that will become a real treasure in the years to come.



Fireside Advent Calendar 15"H x 18.5"W



Christmas House Advent Calendar 22"H x 16"W



Christmas Stockings Advent Calendar 15"H x 18.5"W



Victorian House Advent Calendar 22"H x 16"W



Wooden Advent Puzzles—Our twist on traditional advent calendars, the 24 little drawers can be filled with treats then arranged numerically or randomly—revealing the hidden picture will provide even more fun for the kids!

Advent Calendar Treat Ideas:

- Candies • Poems
- Jewelry • Small Toy Cars
- Stickers • Pictures
- Coins • Special Notes



Christmas at the North Pole

Kindles™—perhaps you have already heard of their work. Have you ever wondered how a snowman seems to wink just as you walk by, or how the lights on the tree seem to have an extra sparkle on Christmas Eve? Consider Kindles. How does Santa manage to fit down even the tightest of chimney? It's our Kindles at work again, putting the twinkle in the eye of even the smallest child believing in the magic of Christmas morning.

Far away in a land where snow falls in glittering heaps like confectioner's sugar, there lives a group of sprites whose vast experience, energy and spirit have given them an extraordinary opportunity. These aren't just elves, they'd be quick to point out with pride and distinction. They are Kindles, Guardians of the Christmas Spirit. *



Though the Kindles' origin is a closely held mystery, this much is assured: like a snowflake, no two are alike!



Mini Gingerbread Houses

It is so hard to destroy a beautiful gingerbread house because you want to eat it. A mini gingerbread house is a great way to have fun decorating and eating your gingerbread house without dismantling a masterpiece.

Better yet, not all gingerbread houses have to be made from gingerbread. Paper, cardboard, foam, paint and glue can be transformed into a "gingerbread" house that can be used year after year!



Naturally Sweet!

Bakerkins see that holiday cookies are done to perfection, though it is quite likely they have added a bit more sugar than the recipe intended. Their specialty is the construction and decoration of gingerbread houses of all shapes and sizes. From "Batter" with his mixing bowl to "Squeeze" with his bag of icing, a finer group of bakers and decorators would be hard to find in any kitchen. And, of course, we need a master builder with his cook book of recipes and designs, "Ginger!" *

“A Christmas Carol” continued from page 21

The closing lines of “A Christmas Carol” read, “. . . It was always said of Scrooge that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed that knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, ‘God bless us, every one!’ ”

Joyce approached the Dickens line as a challenge and an opportunity. She remembers: “We first introduced Scrooge in 1983, thinking that Bob, Mrs. Cratchit and Tiny Tim would join Scrooge in succeeding years as they each had a lesson to teach.

“My earliest characters had even more exaggerated faces than those of today, perhaps because I, like Dickens, look for the story behind each person. Dickens’ time was not perfect, and he didn’t write about beautiful people. He enjoyed his characters, many of whom were from the lower strata of society, for their personalities. The public, however, remembers the Victorian era as romantic, so I adapted the faces of the figurines to better suit their tastes. For me, Scrooge was the antithesis of this look, and the opportunity to present the more spiritual aspect of the holiday.”

The first Scrooge was one of the few Carolers to have clay hands. He wore a white night shirt, solid red long johns, brown felt slippers, and red night cap with unruly gray hair sprouting from beneath it. Although he was an undeniably unattractive figure, this Scrooge sold very well. The current Scrooge is shown wearing a burgundy robe over his nightshirt with a white night cap atop his head.

Mrs. Cratchit was the second figure introduced into the Dickens grouping. Although she was originally dressed in darker colors with a plaid apron, she is currently dressed in a white shirt and plaid dress. With a green shawl over her shoulders, Mrs. Cratchit is shown proudly presenting the plum pudding.

Jacob Marley’s character, as described by Dickens, was transparent. This presented a design challenge for Joyce, who at first considered using Lucite and gauze to achieve this see-through effect. While apprenticing with his mother the year before he started college, Jeff discovered that the key to creating Marley’s ghost in his true spirit was by using many shades of gray. Marley was then wrapped in bells and chains. To make this character more realistic, Joyce wrapped Marley’s chin with a chin strap. In Dickens’ story, Marley’s ghost is described as having a folded kerchief bound about his head and chin. In Victorian times, the dead had their chins bound like this to keep their mouths from falling open.

The jovial Spirit of Christmas Present wears a green velveteen gown trimmed with brown fur. He carries a cornucopia under one arm, while raising a silver goblet with the other hand. In Dickens tale, it is the Spirit of Christmas Future who takes Scrooge to see the celebrations taking place at his nephew Fred’s home as well as the modest family gathering at the Cratchit’s.

The long awaited Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim finally arrived in 1990. The long suffering, yet happy child carried on his loving father’s back is a favorite of

collectors. Joyce hoped that this series of Carolers would encourage people to read “A Christmas Carol” and think about the joy that comes from giving and sharing. Because, as she says, “Christmas has always been about giving. God gave his greatest gift in the form of the baby Jesus, and the wise men traveled far to give him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” *

A Byers Family Recipe Candy Cane Fudge

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup butter or margarine
- 4 cups sugar
- 1 12-oz can of evaporated milk
- 1 7-oz container of marshmallow cream
- 24-oz bag of baking chips—white or milk chocolate
- 2 tsp. vanilla or peppermint extract
- 6 candy canes chopped into small pieces

Instructions:

Combine the butter, sugar and milk in a large sauce pan.

Bring to a boil. Boil for 6 minutes, stirring constantly.

Remove from heat and add marshmallow cream, chocolate chips, vanilla and 1/2 of the chopped candy canes. Mix until well-blended.

Pour mixture into a greased 9x12" pan. Sprinkle with remaining candy cane pieces.

Cool at room temperature. Cut diagonally into serving-sized pieces to form diamond shapes.

THINK PINK



An Opportunity to Give—Byers’ Choice Ltd. Thinks Pink and We Hope You Will, Too

We are really excited about a new project at Byers’ Choice...our first annual “Byers’ Choice Thinks Pink” initiative.

Starting in the month of October—Breast Cancer Awareness Month—Byers’ Choice will be focusing on raising as many funds as we can to

donate to the National Breast Cancer Foundation and Fox Chase Cancer Center for Cancer Research and Programs, our area’s pre-eminent cancer research and treatment facility.

Proceeds from the sale of our “Think Pink” figures will benefit the charities mentioned above. *



Byers' Choice® Ltd.

4355 County Line Road
Chalfont, PA 18914

www.byerschoice.com

  Follow Us Online!

Customer #

simple pleasures. . .

Handcrafted American-made gifts for
a traditional Christmas.



\$6.00 CHRISTMAS 2009



6 88524 01140 7