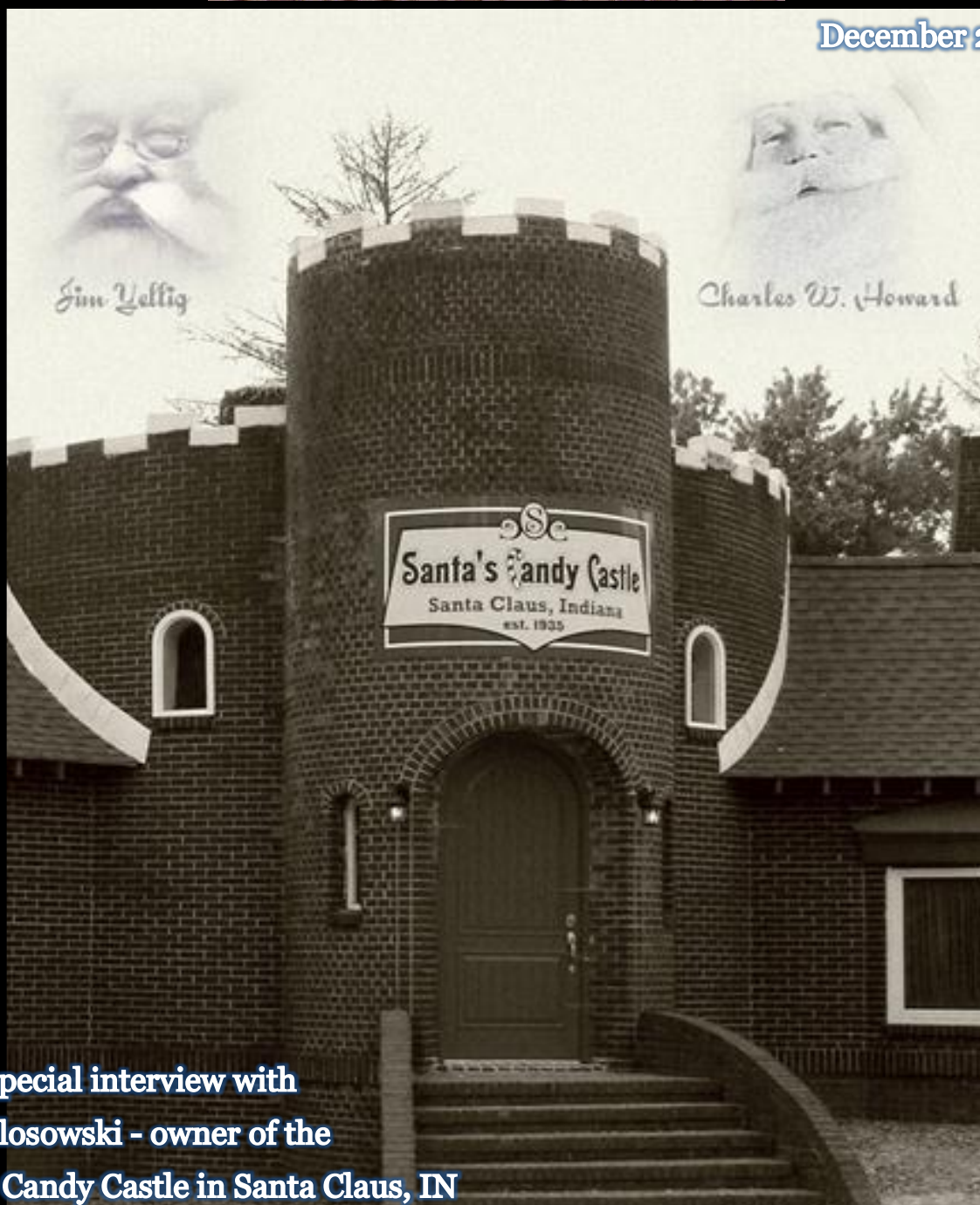


ClausNet

The Santa Claus Network

CLAUSNET GAZETTE

December 24, 2012



A very special interview with
Kevin Klosowski - owner of the
historic Candy Castle in Santa Claus, IN

4th Annual Christmas Eve Edition



CLAUSNET GAZETTE

News From The Santa Claus Network



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And much more...



*The Illinois Association of Professional Santas
wish to dedicate the Christmas Eve ClausNet Gazette in Memoriam of*



*Santa David Hoopes
1946-2012*

We miss you our Friend and Brother in Red



Special Christmas Eve Edition



CLAUSNET GAZETTE

News From The Santa Claus Network



December 24, 2012

Merry Christmas!



"For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this." - Isaiah 9:6

One Solitary Life

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in still another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty.

Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, His executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on Earth. When he was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone and today he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind's progress.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliament that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man on Earth as much as that...One Solitary Life.

~~Dr James Allen Francis, © 1926~~





ClausNet

ClausNet is the world's premier Santa Claus Network and the largest Santa, Mrs. Claus, and helpers social group anywhere! Here you will find members from every Santa organization in the world, coming together to build a community of friendship, trust, and fellowship. Together we build unity and common bond for men and women dedicated to the faithful portrayal of Santa Claus (Father Christmas, Père Noël, Kris Kringle, Sinterklas, Baba Noel, Grandfather Frost, Joulupukki...), Mrs. Claus, and all others who devote their time to bringing the magic of Christmas to children and adults throughout the world!

ClausNet.com is the largest resource and social network for Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, Elves, Reindeer Handlers, and Santa helpers for the purposes of sharing stories, advice, news, and information. Most importantly, ClausNet is bringing people together to build friendships that help spread happiness to the true believers of Santa Claus -- the child inside all of us.

To all the members of ClausNet!

Thank you for being a part of this unique and special forum. ClausNet has grown from a dream into the largest on-line community for Santas, Mrs. Clauses, Reindeer Handlers, Elves, and Helpers in the world! The special magic and feeling you get when you are on-line with ClausNet is the result of all the great members! Without each and every one of you, ClausNet would not be possible.

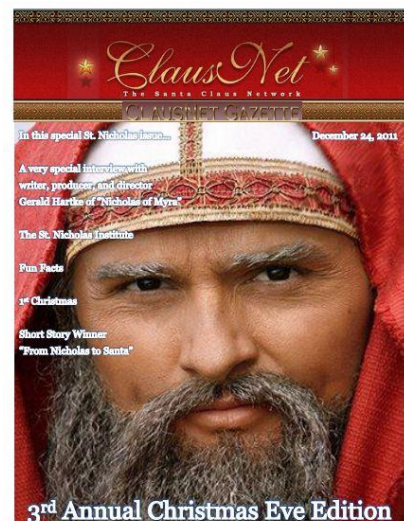
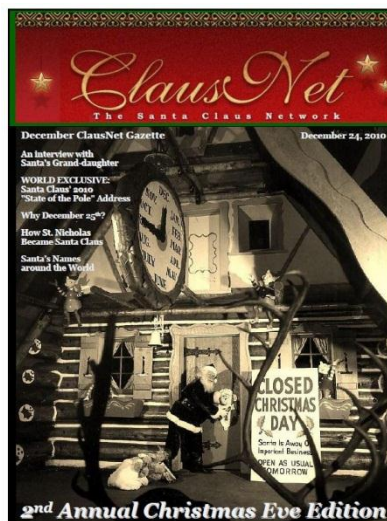
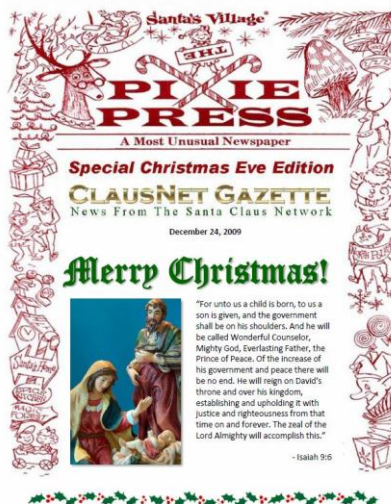
Thank you to all our moderators and contributors. A forum this large needs a lot of people to lend a hand to ensure that the quality and integrity of our community is upheld. Your constant and continued support is truly appreciated! We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a great New Year!

Sincerely,

Michael Rielly

Phillip L. Weng

Past Christmas Eve Editions



An Interview with Kevin Klosowski

Our special guest for this Christmas Eve edition of the ClausNet Gazette is none other than Kevin Klosowski, the owner and proprietor of the historic Santa's Candy Castle in Santa Claus, Indiana!

About Kevin Klosowski...

When Chicago accountant Kevin Klosowski bought and renovated historic Santa's Candy Castle six years ago, he reinvented himself as a sort of a real-life Willie Wonka — minus the crazy outfit. He says he has "the greatest job in the world."

Klosowski doesn't have a chocolate factory, but his vast selection of chocolate confections makes it easy to imagine that he does.



Kevin Klosowski

Like Willie Wonka, Klosowski features candy in an enticing array of whacky flavors. Cookie dough-flavored salt water taffy and tart, pucker-inducing green apple popcorn is a couple of his more exotic offerings.

Santa's Candy Castle is much more than a candy store. It was a popular tourist attraction in the 1930s, but its existence today is a bit of a Christmas miracle — one that can be attributed to Klosowski.

Decades before Americans had heard of a theme park, plans were underway for "Santa Claus Town," a themed attraction where the joy of Christmas would live year round. Santa's Candy Castle was the first building constructed on the property and opened to great fanfare during the Christmas season of 1935, a time when many Americans were feeling the relentless sting of the Great Depression.

The castle's Toy Village provided children a fairytale-like setting to play with expensive toys their financially strapped families couldn't afford. Since nothing was for sale, there was no pressure for parents to purchase the toys.

WWII changed everything. Gasoline and tire rationing slowed tourism to a trickle, and toy sponsors pulled out as they put their resources into making war supplies instead of toys.

Santa's Candy Castle, which opened with such great promise, sat empty and forgotten. Attempts to reopen it floundered, and by the 1970s, it appeared to be shuttered for good. Klosowski came onto the scene in 2006, determined to restore the castle and recapture that sense of wonder visitors felt in the 1930s.

"I was inspired by the original vision of giving visitors a magical Christmas experience regardless of whether they had money to spend," says Klosowski. "I felt that the attraction still had so much to offer, and I became passionate about finding a way to make that happen."

It took time, money, and determination, but the exterior of Santa's Castle looks exactly like it did when it opened nearly 80 years ago. A number of free events and activities are offered at the castle year round, but Story Time with Santa is the big crowd pleaser in December.

Klosowski says he loves welcoming returning customers that stop by for sweet treats and family fun every holiday season. "I can't imagine anything more rewarding than being part of a family tradition and helping to make cherished memories that will last long after their visit."

- By Tracey Teo: Special to the ClausNet Gazette

ClausNet: How long have you been in the Christmas industry and how did you get started?

Klosowski: Being born and baptized a Christian, I'd say I've been intimately involved with Christmas my entire life! But my acquisition and restoration of the castle in 2005 officially marked the beginning of my full-time focus on celebrating and sharing the magic of Christmas with a larger, international community.

ClausNet: What do you enjoy most about the Candy Castle?

Klosowski: Being able to help families (particularly with young children) experience a fun and magical visit. It is truly an honor and a privilege to become part of their cherished family memories.

ClausNet: What is your favorite part of the Christmas Season?

Klosowski: I'd have to say it's the overwhelming sense of nostalgia that I experience (and I see my adult guests experience) as we watch the awe and wonder of Christmas that children have. This is the closest thing that adults have to reliving that magical time in our lives before the pure innocence of childhood was lost to the harsh realities of the adult world.

ClausNet: What is your dream for the future of the Castle and the Workshop property?

Klosowski: My dream is for the property to ultimately realize the original shared vision of founder Milton Harris and Postmaster James Martin. They created the concept of a themed attraction, and their vision was to fully develop the 1,000 acre+ property into a magical year-round Christmas experience for visitors of all ages, races, backgrounds and income levels.



ClausNet: What is your favorite color?

Klosowski: Red, of course!

ClausNet: What are your favorite foods?

Klosowski: Almost anything home-cooked that is enjoyed with family & friends – to me, a good meal is as much about whom you enjoy it with, as what is being served. That and anything chocolate!

ClausNet: Coke or Pepsi?

Klosowski: Only Coke. In a glass bottle if at all possible (the way the Good Lord intended it).

ClausNet: What is your favorite cookie?

Klosowski: Chocolate Chip

ClausNet: What keeps you busy when you are not working?

Klosowski: My family: wife Diane of 18+ years, children Nicole (12), Thomas (10), and Tyler (7).

ClausNet: What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?

Klosowski: My background is in Accounting and I worked professionally in that field for over a decade before applying that experience to my current endeavor. I am very happy with what I'm doing now, and cannot imagine doing anything else.

ClausNet: What profession would you not like to attempt?

Klosowski: Politics

ClausNet: What were some of your favorite toys when you were a child?

Klosowski: All the classic construction sets: Lego, Lincoln Logs, Erector Set, Tinker Toys, Bristle Blocks. Board games, especially Monopoly.

ClausNet: What was the last book that you read?

Klosowski: The Legend of The Three Trees (aloud to a group of children). Considered by most to be a short, children's book – I feel that it holds profound meaning for anyone facing loss or adversity. It speaks of God's great plan for us and our need to have faith and trust Him, even during trying times. Do yourself a favor: find and read that book!

ClausNet: What is your favorite movie?

Klosowski: A Christmas Story. I have absolutely loved it since I watched it at the theater in 1983 (we were one of only a few families there!)



ClausNet: Do you have a favorite Christmas movie?

Klosowski: A Christmas Story – but I also really love Christmas Vacation, Miracle on 34th Street and It's a Wonderful Life

ClausNet: What is your favorite Christmas song?

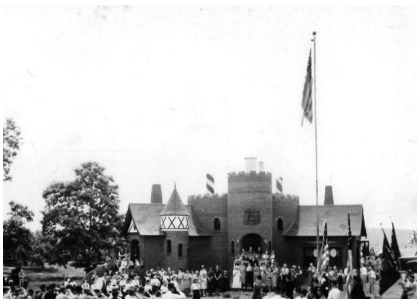
Klosowski: The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire)
– the Nat King Cole version

ClausNet: What is your most memorable experience of Santa while growing up?

Klosowski: Visiting him at Santa's Village theme park in Dundee, IL. Stopping by Santa's house and checking out the frozen North Pole outside was always the first stop of the day. Perhaps seeing Santa during the summer growing up is why operating a year-round Christmas attraction seems completely normal to me.

ClausNet: What are your hobbies / interests?

Klosowski: I like to take my kids skating (roller or ice – but ice is better!), I enjoy coaching my boys' soccer teams, and occasionally watching one of my hometown Chicago sports teams (just not the Cubs).



ClausNet: What impact does the Castle have on the Santa Claus community?

Klosowski: The Castle has had a profound influence on the Santa Claus community since its early days. The early success and popularity of the Castle provided the national stage upon which Charles Howard held his first successful Santa school in 1938, one of the most defining moments in the history of the community. The only known meeting of Howard and Jim Yellig – the patriarchs of our community – occurred at the Castle that same year, eventually inspiring the creation of the Santa Claus Oath which serves as the definitive statement of purpose and commitment for the community today.



ClausNet: What were some of the biggest obstacles that you have had to overcome with your project?

Klosowski: The challenges associated with the physical restoration of the historic building were far more substantial than originally anticipated (they almost always are). We've also had a protracted battle with the State to protect the Castle from an impending 18 month road closure that would have been absolutely catastrophic.



ClausNet: How did you do your research for the Castle?

Klosowski: When inquiries in the local area about the castle's history turned up more questions than answers, the internet became our only hope. By the Grace of God, we stumbled across an historical summary of the Castle written by Phillip Wenz. Phil took our knowledge about the history of the Castle from about a "-3" to an "8". The little bit of information that we had about the castle before working with Phil had been completely wrong. Phil was so gracious with his time and knowledge and played a vital role in getting us to where we are today.

ClausNet: What do you think St. Nicholas himself would say about today's Christmas and Santa?

Klosowski: To those who have tried to secularize the holiday, and marginalize or even completely ignore the true meaning of Christmas, I think he'd say "you're doing it wrong". But for those of us who work extremely hard to try to keep the true meaning of Christmas alive and prevalent in everything we do, I think he'd say "you're doing great, please never stop working to protect and preserve the true meaning and spirit of Christmas."

ClausNet: What is it like living in Santa Claus, Indiana?

Klosowski: Fantastic! Small town charm, Big time fun! It took me almost 40 years to realize it, but America's Christmas Hometown truly is MY hometown.

ClausNet: The round room of the Castle is where Charles W. Howard and Jim Yellig met for the only time back in 1938. It also houses the Santa Claus Oath and the International Santa Claus Hall of Fame. Have you ever reflected on the history that the Candy Castle represents to the Santa Claus Community?

Klosowski: Yes, the gravity of the Castle's history is at the forefront of my mind every day. As proud as I am to be a part of the Castle's evolving legacy, I feel a tremendous sense of duty and obligation to be a good steward of the Castle's history and legacy for future generations. It is that sense of duty that will hopefully inspire and guide me through the many challenges that lie ahead, to one day see the property fully realize the original vision of its founders.

The History of the Christmas Tree

Long before the advent of Christianity, evergreen plants and trees had a special meaning for people during the winter. Just as it is customary for people today to decorate their homes during the festive season with pine, spruce, and fir trees, ancient cultures hung evergreen boughs over their doors and windows. In many countries it was believed that evergreens would keep away witches, ghosts, evil spirits, and illness.

Honoring the Evergreen

Each year in the Northern Hemisphere, December 21st or December 22nd has the shortest day and the longest night of the year. This is called the winter solstice.

Many ancient cultures believed that the sun was a god, and that winter came each year because the god had become ill and weak. They celebrated the winter solstice because it meant that at last the sun god would begin to get well. The evergreen plants and trees served as a reminder of all the other plants and trees that would begin to grow once the summer returned.

The ancient Egyptians worshipped a god called Ra, which had the head of a hawk and wore the sun as a disc on its crown. At the winter solstice, when the Egyptians believed that Ra was recovering from his illness, they would fill their homes with green palm rushes to symbolize the triumph of life over death.

In ancient Rome the solstice was celebrated with a feast called the Saturnalia, which was held in honor of their god of agriculture, Saturn. The Romans knew that the solstice meant that soon farms and orchards would again be green and fruitful. To honor the occasion, their homes and temples were decorated with evergreen boughs. In Northern Europe the mysterious Druids, who were the priests of the ancient Celts, also decorated their temples with evergreen boughs as a symbol of everlasting life. The Vikings in Scandinavia thought that evergreens were the special plant of the sun god, Balder.

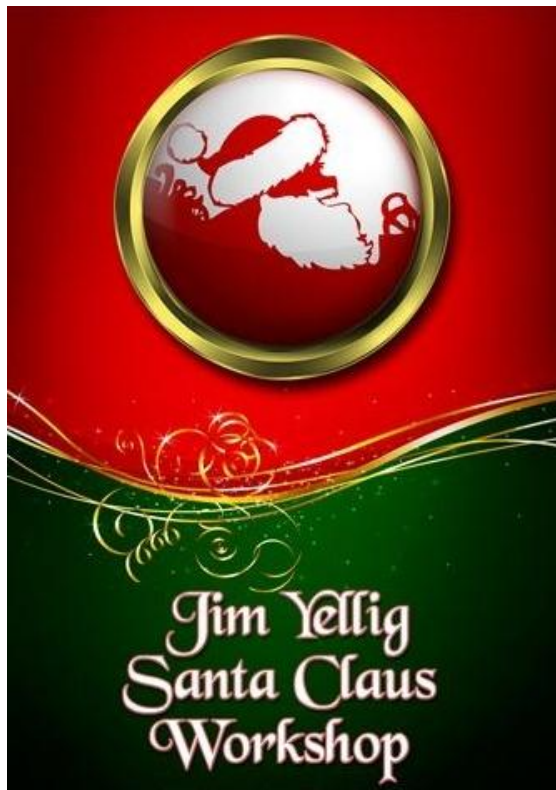
The First Christmas Trees

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition as it is known today. It is thought that the tradition was started in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, was the first to add lighted candles to a tree. One winter night while he was composing a sermon and walking toward his home, he was struck by the beauty of stars twinkling between the branches of the evergreens. He went home to recreate the scene for his family, where he set up a tree in the main room and wired its branches with lighted candles.



The Christmas tree was not adopted immediately by Americans. Most 19th-century Americans found Christmas trees odd. The first record of a Christmas Tree being on display was in the 1830s by the German settlers of Pennsylvania, although trees had been a tradition in many German homes much earlier. The Pennsylvania German settlements had community trees as early as 1747. But, as late as the 1840s, Christmas trees were seen as pagan symbols and not accepted by most Americans.

In 1846, the popular royals, Queen Victoria and her German Prince, Albert, were sketched in the Illustrated London News standing with their children around a Christmas tree. Victoria was very popular with her subjects, and what was done at court immediately became fashionable in both Britain and fashion-conscious East Coast American Society. The Christmas tree had arrived.



March 23, 24, and 25, 2013
www.JimYelligSantaClausWorkshop.com

Raymond "Jim" Yellig
 "The Real Santa from Santa Claus"
 Santa Claus, Indiana
 1894-1984

One of the most beloved and legendary Santas of all time, Jim Yellig was known as the "Real Santa" from Santa Claus, Indiana. Born in the small village of Mariah Hill, just a few miles north of Santa Claus, Yellig would become the face of Santa Claus, Indiana, for 54 years. Yellig appeared at Santa's Candy Castle and Santa Claus Town, the nation's first themed attraction, in the late 1930s. He answered children's letters sent to the Santa Claus Post Office. A World War I veteran and an active Legionnaire, Yellig added to his fame by appearing in American Legion Christmas parades in New York City, Miami, Los Angeles and Philadelphia. In 1946, Yellig became the resident Santa at Santa Claus Land, the world's first theme park. A position he held for 38 years. No Santa before or since has had as many children visit him in person as Santa Jim Yellig.



The History of the Christmas Tree - continued

The Evolution of the Christmas Tree

By the 1890s, Christmas ornaments were arriving from Germany, and the popularity of the Christmas tree around the United States was on the rise. It was noted that Europeans preferred small trees about four feet in height, while Americans preferred taller trees that reached from floor to ceiling.

Americans in the early 20th century used mostly homemade ornaments, while the German-American sect continued to use the traditional fruits, nuts, and marzipan cookies to decorate their trees. Popcorn that was dyed bright colors and laced with berries and nuts was later added. With electricity came Christmas lights, making it possible to light the tree for days on end. With this, Christmas trees began to appear in town squares across the country and having a Christmas tree in the home became an American tradition.

Christmas trees have come a long way since their humble beginnings. Despite the many lights and shining ornaments adorning these beautiful trees today, the message they inspire remains the same. Christmas trees represent hope and life, family and love. Each year the tradition of picking out a tree and decorating it with loved ones reinforces this important message.

Sources: "History of Christmas Trees — History.com"



ClausNet Member of the Month for December 2012

Each month, our Featured Member section profiles a ClausNet member. Members are chosen totally at random by Michael Rielly and the staff of ClausNet. Once selected as Featured Member of the Month, we interview the candidate and post the interview here. This is a great way to get to know your fellow ClausNet members!

I am happy to announce our December 2012 ClausNet Featured Member of the Month is Santa Marty!



It's always a great pleasure to announce our Featured Member of the Month but especially in the month of December. This year's December Featured Member is our very own Hawaiian Santa Claus, Santa Marty! Santa Marty joined us back in December of 2009. Since then, he's been a key contributor to our community.

I've never been to Hawaii but hope to visit one day during the Christmas season. Of course I wouldn't get to experience a white Christmas, but I've always thought about it ever since the first time I heard Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters sing Mele Kalikimaka. There is just something about sitting on the beach, listening to Christmas songs sung in Hawaiian and accompanied by ukulele that I've always wondered about. I also love Tako Poke. If you don't know what Tako Poke is, read on. We talked with Marty about Santa Claus, Christmas in Hawaii, and his some of his favorite foods -- including Tako Poke. Here is what he had to say...[read full interview](#)

Updates

The film documentary ***They Wore the Red Suit*** has been finished and will be released next year. Special "Director Cut" editions are now available. The film will also be premiered in March at the 3rd annual Jim Yellig Santa Claus Workshop in Santa Claus, Indiana. For more information on this [documentary see the film's website](#).

Nicholas of Myra movie producer Gerald Hartke has announced a [new book](#) from the film's still photography about the life of the young Nicholas. The film is still in production with upcoming announcements for the film's release.



You have about five seconds to Make your Audience Believe your Santa Claus

For many of you during this season this will be your first venture into the wonderful world of portraying Santa Claus. I had often wondered how new Santas made their first appearances with little or no training. I heard many stories of men putting on the “Red Suit” and the next thing they were performing at some event. I shouldn’t be surprised as that is my story too. I created the Santa Mentoring Program to help new Santas by matching them with a seasoned Santa. I’m trying to reach out to all new Santas however, I hope what is written here is a help to all.

It’s been said you have about 5 seconds to make an impression upon your audience. Those 5 seconds set the tone for making you believable, if you’re sitting at a mall chair, in a parade or a house visit. It doesn’t seem like it’s a lot of time but the audience’s mind is going to be checking off a number of items in that 5 second equation. How you come across will determine if you’re accepted.

1. Appearance. The public has an image in mind which may be the Santa of their childhood but more than likely it is the Santa depicted in the Coke Cola advertisements. Haddon Sundblum created and painted an image which set the standard for the look of Santa.

You don’t need to buy the “Coke Cola Suit” but you need to have a clean Red or Burgundy Santa Suit which fits properly. The fur trim needs to be white and with a medium length nap. Around your belly should be a 4 inch leather belt with a shiny brass buckle. *

Santa should always wear white gloves which need to be changed for each new performance. The best overall glove is a long wristed white glove with rubberized dots on the palms and fingers. These are four inches longer than normal gloves (cover your bare wrists) and helps turning pages of story books.

Your head should be covered with a Santa Hat dangling a white pom, pom. Boots, help make a costume so choose comfortable black boots. New Santa’s should consider investing in polyurethane costume boots sold by most costume shops. These usually have a side zipper making them easier to put on and have a 1 inch heel. After wearing these for a season or two you can decide the type and price boot you want.

Most of these boots come with a boot cuff attached or as a separate item. Please! Do not sew the boot cuff to the bottom of your trousers or wear the cuff around your boot top. This looks tacky and immediately shows you aren’t the real Santa.

2. Facial Features. If you are going to wear a designer beard make sure you have combed it out properly and it fits your face. Make sure your mouth shows. It isn’t fair to a child to take photographs or talk without showing your mouth. If you have a real beard, make sure your bleaching is white and you have trimmed it neatly.

It is not necessary to curl the ends of your mustache to look like Santa. New Santa’s with real beards may choose to wait a season or two, too develop this look and have the moustache hair to work with. You may notice Santa depicted in pictures does not have a curl and his mustache has a wave instead. Don’t be intimidated by the mustaches of older Santa’s as your unique look will develop with experience.

Santa needs to have rosy cheeks and you should be careful not to overdo it. If you have blemishes or sunspots you need to use a skin colored base on the exposed areas of your face. Be careful above your eyebrows as the fur of your Santa cap quickly shows the makeup. A red blush applied with a makeup brush should highlight the cheekbone and blend into the base makeup. You don’t want to have crimson red cheeks just a subtle look like you have been out in the cold.

3. What is your role? Regardless if you are a mall Santa, center of the parade or making house visits, you have a role to play. In a mall setting you will see hundreds of children and each one will require your attention. Parades and similar events are fun because you are welcomed and you are playing to the crowd. Making a house visit puts you on your own and you should prepare to entertain for the time you will be there. I’ve chosen making a house visit as my example.

4. A few simple steps make a great event. Calling your client about a week in advance of your visit is a wise habit to develop. You should find out the number and age ranges of the children and how many adults will be there. Will you be asked to give out presents or maybe lead a "Happy Birthday" song. Will any special guests such as Grandparents or out of town travelers be present. Make sure the host knows or alerts adults to bring cameras and you don't mind posing for pictures. You should confirm the arrival time and any helpful hints on location. A good idea is to arrange for a phone call to the host when you arrive. This gives the host a heads up and sometimes you may be asked to wait a few minutes while dinner is finished.

Discuss with the host any requirements you may have such as: Request an armless chair for children on your knee visits. Maybe you need help from the host or an elf reading the names and distributing the gifts. A 40 gallon garbage bag left on the porch can be placed in your bag and carried into the house. You may want to ask for a parking space being left for you to avoid walking the neighborhood or any inclement weather. Oh yes, this may be the time to ask for your fee be given to you in a Christmas Card envelope as you leave the house.

With the information you have you will be able to develop a game plan for the event.

5. The Visit. I'm always a little nervous as I stand waiting for the door to open. When the door opens the children will flock to be around Santa. Don't make a loud "ho ho ho." If you scare a baby or small child they will not warm up to you for the entire evening. Stand at the threshold for a long minute with your hands on your hips, a big smile on your face, your belly jiggling and a soft chuckle as you say "Hello Everyone, I'm so glad to be here." While you are doing this survey the room finding your Santa Chair and a path to it. Look to see where the grandparents or special guests are seated then proceed with your entrance.

Children will lead you to your chair and you may wish to hold their hand as they do so. You should acknowledge the special guests by saying: "your Aunt Sue and you travelled all the way from Florida, just a bit nippy here isn't it? Spotting grandma I might stop before her and say: "I remember you when you were about this hi (arm extended out at about 3-4 feet) and one year you had a terrible meltdown because you didn't get the doll you wanted!" Right here I put my hand over my mouth and say: "Oops, I shouldn't have said that in front of the children but you turned out real good!" most everyone will go along or joke back with you. The kids love that you have something on Grandma, etc.

Once you are at your chair it's time to have the children visit with and have pictures taken. I many times tell the child, "now let's smile real nice and get this over with so we can talk." Don't rush the children and let them have their time with Santa. You may wish to have a group sing along of Christmas Carols. If you're not sure about the words print them out and distribute them to the audience. This assures the singing of the words and everyone's participation. If you do magic or have any special entertainment now is a good time to do it.

I always carry and read the "Night before Christmas" as the finally of my visit. This quiets the children down and I can exit with a hearty "ho ho ho and to all a good night." The exception to this is if I give out presents; I read the story before the presents. Once presents are given it will be very difficult to bring order to the children and usually they are so busy playing they don't mind you leaving.

In conclusion: You are going to be the best Santa ever. Be yourself and above all have fun playing your role.

Merry Christmas Santa Claus!

SantasSource.com is a treasure chest of web sites selling items for the Santa Trade.

Santa Lou Knezevich

Creator of The Legendary Santas Mentoring Program

The Legendary Santa Mentoring Program is free and may be obtained by request to: legendarysantasprog@gmail.com



Santa Lou presents the Legendary Santas Mentoring Program at the 2012 Jim Yellig Santa Claus Workshop in Santa Claus, Indiana.

Legendary Santas Mentoring Program-Jim Yellig, Charles W. Howard, and other legendary Santas were men of great character who shared their knowledge and set standards for all to follow. They developed the character of Santa Claus in a professional manner and they were unafraid to share this information with Santas "in-training." The accomplishments of these men have weathered the passage of time. We at ClausNet believe it essential that their values continue and be passed on to each new Santa, Mrs. Claus and helper. For this reason, Santa Lou Knezevich has created the Legendary Santas Mentoring Program, as a means for training Santas with high moral standards and superior performance values.

Qualifications of Mentors-Seasoned Santas from across the country can volunteer to become a Mentor. Seasoned Santas would have a minimum of five seasons portraying Santa. Mentors would be individuals or members of state and local Santa Associations who want to help a new Santa get started. Each mentor would be matched to a new Santa and interact one-on-one. This would be a formal relationship where seasoned Santas share experiences within the context of the new Santa's developmental goals.

Qualifications for New Santas-New Santas are those who have never made a Santa appearance or a limited number of appearances. Appearances are public or private events such as house parties, church groups, schools, malls, parades, tree lightings, etc.

Study Guide-The study guide will not compete with presentations of established Santa Schools but will provide information the beginning Santa needs to know. Some examples of subjects are; Santa history, costuming, resource listings, Santas first appearance, handling children, entertaining/storytelling and others. The study guide will be comprehensive and written in an easy to use manner for experienced and new Santas. The study guide may be used at a pace comfortable to the mentor and mentee.

Other Considerations -It is preferred the Santa and mentee live within driving distance of each other however, the study guide maybe used by email and telephone. The Study Guide can be obtained electronically. There is no charge for the mentoring program.

Course Completion-Upon completion of the Study Guide and mentoring process the new Santa will be administered the Santa Claus Oath and both Santas will receive a certificate of completion from the Legendary Santas Mentoring Program. The certificate will be suitable for framing and should become a treasured item of a new Santa's learning experience.

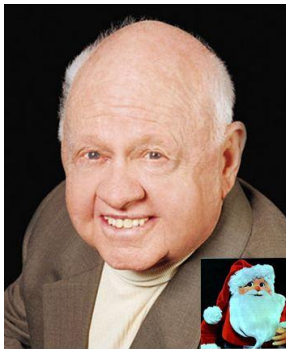
International Santa Claus Hall of Fame



The Santa Claus Hall of Fame is an ongoing project that studies, celebrates, and preserves the historical documentation of the many men and women who have greatly contributed to the Legend of Santa Claus. The Hall is dedicated to Nicholas of Myra, the 4th century bishop known for his great deeds of generosity. His true life story is the basis for the Santa Claus Legend. Inductees for the Santa Claus Hall of Fame can be nominated by various sources. Many come from the professional Santa Claus community and their many on-line social groups. Others come from department stores, shopping centers, chambers of commerce, and families of the deceased. Nominations are then reviewed and researched for accuracy.

The nomination procedure can take up to 18 months to be verified, reviewed and to be delivered to committee for the selection process. Once a year, each December, the successful candidates will be announced and enshrined into the Santa Claus Hall of Fame. For more information contact the [International Santa Claus Hall of Fame website](http://www.santaclaus.org).

The 2012 International Santa Claus Hall of Fame Class of 2012



Mickey Rooney
"Santa's Voice"
Los Angeles, California



Carl Anderson
"Lone Star Santa"
Austin, Texas



Cliff Snider
"Christ in Christmas"
High Point, North Carolina



Jim Morrison
"Christmas Memories"
Paradise, Pennsylvania



Charles E. Hall
"Radio City's Santa"
New York City, New York



Mary Ida Doan
"Michigan's Mrs. Claus"
Bay City, Michigan

Santa Claus and His Works



This multi-framed illustration of “Santa Claus and His Works” was artist Thomas Nast’s first major depiction of Santa Claus in *Harper’s Weekly* (appearing in the postdated December 29, 1866 issue). Although other artists of the period sketched Santa Claus, Nast stands apart from the rest for his role in creating and popularizing the modern image of the Christmas figure. He contributed 33 Christmas drawings to *Harper’s Weekly* from 1863 through 1886, and Santa is seen or referenced in all but one. Nast’s full-page illustration of Santa Claus in 1881 quickly attained status akin to an official portrait, and is still widely reproduced today. Before Nast, different regions, ethnic groups, and artists in the United States presented Santa Claus in various ways. A sketch in *Harper’s Weekly* from 1858 shows a beardless Santa whose sleigh is pulled by a turkey. Nast was instrumental in standardizing and nationalizing the image of a jolly, kind, and portly Santa in a red, fur-trimmed suit delivering toys from his North Pole workshop. This was accomplished through his work in the pages of *Harper’s Weekly*, his contributions to other publications, and by Christmas-card merchants in the 1870s and 1880s who relied heavily upon his portraiture.

In the featured “Santa and His Works,” Nast adapts characteristics from his German heritage (he was born in Bavaria) and from Clement Clark Moore’s famous 1822 poem “A Visit From St. Nicholas” (commonly known as “Twas the Night Before Christmas”), but the artist adds other aspects developed from his own creative mind and talented pen. The effect is to unveil much of the mystery behind Santa Claus by presenting a more complete account of his life, mission, and home. Instead of depicting him merely delivering gifts, the entire process of his work is detailed from the preparation to the execution to the recovery. The centerpiece is what children hope for: Santa stuffing stockings hung on the fireplace, as toys lie on the floor. He is plump, white-bearded, red-nosed, dressed all in fur, carries the sack of a peddler (evoking earlier lore of Santa as a peddler), and is still the short elf of Moore’s poetic version (here, Santa needs a chair to reach the mantle).

Along the sides, Nast adds parallel circular insets. To fulfill Santa's traditional task of rewarding nice children and punishing naughty children, Santa uses a telescope to locate good children (upper-left), and records the behavior of children in an enormous account book (upper-right). On the center-left, he is seen in his workshop carefully crafting toys by hand (as opposed to the increasing reliance on factory production in America). On the center-right, he is taking a well-deserved post-Christmas rest in a rocking chair placed before a fireplace, as he holds a meerschaum pipe popular among Germans, Dutch, and their American descendants. On the lower-left, the diminutive Santa uses a ladder to decorate the Christmas tree (another German tradition), and on the lower-right, sews doll clothing by hand (rather than using a sewing machine). Three years later, in 1869, "Santa and His Works" was included in a new publication of Moore's poem illustrated by Nast. At that time, Santa's suit was changed to the red color for which it has thereafter been associated.

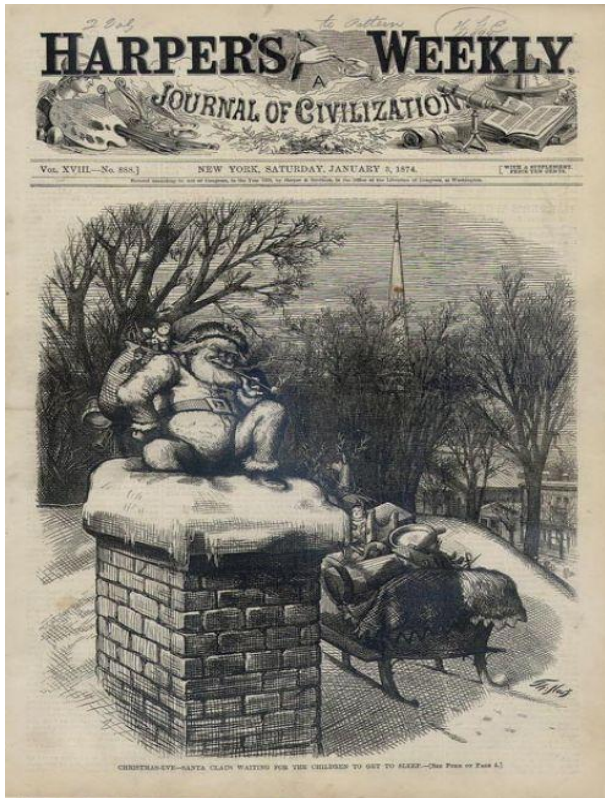


The origin of Santa's home at the North Pole is uncertain, but in "Santa and His Works" Nast may have been the first illustrator to so identify the locale. (An 1857 illustration in *Harper's Weekly* shows Santa preparing to leave a snowy but unnamed homeland.) In the late 1840s and the 1850s a series of expeditions to the Arctic captured public attention, and the area began to be discussed as the home of the elusive Santa Claus. Year-round the North Pole had the snow that was becoming associated in the popular image with Christmas (the American publishers of magazines, books, and cards carrying Christmas illustrations were headquartered in the snowy Northeast). Furthermore, the North Pole's geographic isolation permitted the jolly old elf to work without interruption, and the region's independence from all nations allowed Santa to be a symbol of universal good will. The reference to the North Pole in the featured cartoon is on the curving border in the upper-right and reads "Santa Clausville, N. P." The linkage of symbol and place was obviously common enough by 1866 that Nast realized he could simply abbreviate "North Pole."

While setting the national standard, Nast's own depiction of Santa Claus changed over the years. He began his almost-annual contribution of Christmas illustrations when he joined the staff of *Harper's Weekly* in 1862 during the Civil War. His first Santa (in the postdated January 3, 1863 issue) is a small elf distributing Christmas presents to Union soldiers in camp. Santa dangles by the neck a comical jumping jack identified in accompanying text as Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president. There was no doubt in Nast's illustration whose side Santa favors in the war. Besides the military context, the cartoon is set off from later ones in that the gift giving is for adults, not children (except for the drummer boys). The other two Christmas illustrations of Nast's published during the Civil War emphasize family scenes, with Santa relegated to the background.

From 1866-1871, Nast continued to elaborate upon the image of Santa Claus portrayed in "Santa and His Works." As in the featured cartoon, he also emphasized during this period Santa's disciplinary role in judging whether the behavior of children during the past year warranted Christmas rewards or punishment. In an 1870 cartoon, Santa surprises two naughty children by jumping out as a jack-in-the-box clutching a switch for spanking. In 1871, Santa sits at his desk reading letter from parents chronicling their children's good and bad acts, with the "letters from naughty children's parents" far outnumbering the "letters from good children's parents." It is probably not coincidental that Nast was at that time the father of several young children (the eldest, Julia, was 9 years old in 1871). Whatever the reason, the cartoons helped revive the idea of Santa as reinforcing parental discipline, a notion that had waned since the publication of Moore's poem in which Santa brought a "happy Christmas to all."

Through the rest of the 1870s, Nast's Santa Claus was no longer the disciplinarian, but, instead, played a cat-and-mouse game with children in which he tried not to be seen and they tried to catch him in the act of delivering presents. Again, the illustrations likely reflected the situation in Nast's home, where he loved to wrap presents and celebrate the season, but at a time when his children had become old enough to try to find the gifts and nab the gift-giver. In "Santa Waiting for Children to Get to Sleep" (1874), Santa is forced to delay on a rooftop because children in the house below are still awake. A related poem blames the late-night hours of the family on the use of gas lighting in homes.



Santa Claus and His Works - continued

As Nast's own children entered and left their teen years, knowing that Santa was really their father, the artist's illustrations finally showed direct communication and interaction between Santa Claus and the pictured children. In a postdated January 1879 issue, a girl drops a letter to Santa in a mailbox (the first time the artist depicted a letter from a child to Santa), and in December 1884, Santa and a girl are able to speak with each other by using a relatively new invention, the telephone. In the January 1879 issue, another Nast cartoon portrays Santa Claus in the midst of a group of gleeful children who he embraces affectionately. Santa is now recognized as part of the family, whose shared love is the greatest gift. Nast's Santa makes his last featured appearance in *Harper's Weekly* in 1885 when the jolly old (man-size) elf offers himself as a present. Nast's last two Christmas illustrations in *Harper's Weekly* appeared in December 1886, when he resigned from the newspaper, but his impact on the popular image of Santa Claus continued and remains potent to this day.

- Robert C. Kennedy

Charles W. Howard
 "Dean of Santa Clauses"
 Albion, New York
 1896-1966

Charles W. Howard's professional career is that of a legend. He first played Santa as a boy in a classroom play. As an adult he found himself asked to help out a friend and play Santa in a store front window in downtown Albion. This experience helped Howard's urge to perfect the role of Santa Claus as much as he could. In his early career Howard caught the train next to his farm in Albion and commuted to Rochester and then Buffalo to be Santa in department stores. It was about this time he started to develop the idea for a "school" for Santas. Howard's first school was in the fall of 1937. Howard also appeared in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade from 1948 through 1965. Oddly, he never worked as Santa in the New York City flagship store. From 1948-1964, Howard flew from New York City to Kansas City, Missouri to be the Santa at the Macy's store there. In 1965, his last Christmas season, Howard worked at Nieman Marcus in Dallas, Texas.



The History of Santa Claus Town

Once Upon a Time in a Place Called Santa Claus...

So begins the modern-day fairy tale of “Santa Claus Town”, the nation’s first themed attraction which was built in the 1930s in the real-life town of Santa Claus, Indiana. It is a tale of how this magical place was created, became loved by thousands, then closed and was all but forgotten. It is a tale whose ending is still being written, as local company St. Nicholas Development, LLC continues to work to restore the historic properties that comprised this extraordinary attraction.

To tell this story – the whole story, that is – requires us to go back to the time before the town was called Santa Claus. And so our story begins, more than 150 years ago...

Our tale begins with a hint of uncertainty – but that’s to be expected with stories that are over 150 years old, particularly fairy tales. So, as with most fairy tales, there are a few variations of the story of how the town of Santa Claus, Indiana got its name.

Perhaps the most famous version of the story was the one featured on Paul Harvey’s Rest of the Story program on Christmas Eve 1992. In this very entertaining version, Santa Claus was the “nameless town” before being named Santa Claus. This may have been a bit of creative license by the radio station, however, since the town had been formed as Santa Fee in 1846, ten years before becoming Santa Claus.

A less famous and more dubious version of the story was put forth by Carl Barrett, the entrepreneur who built “Santa Claus Park” in the 1930s. Although many elements of Barrett’s version are likely factual, the highlight of the story – a crashing meteor – is highly suspect, particularly since it supposedly landed on the exact property where Barrett was building his attraction.

So how exactly did this town receive its famous name? Strong evidence suggests that the town’s efforts to establish its own post office played a significant role. The town of Santa Fee’s application for a post office had been rejected due to the fact that a post office had already been established by another town with the same name. In order to obtain their own post office, the residents needed to choose another name for their town. While there remains some question as to their exact source of inspiration, there is no doubt that they did in fact make the historic decision to rename their town Santa Claus. On May 21, 1856, the US Post Office Department accepted the town’s application with the new name of Santa Claus, thus establishing the town’s first post office. The town of Santa Claus, Indiana had been born!

The town’s unique name went largely unnoticed until the 1920s, when Postmaster James Martin began promoting the Santa Claus postmark. A growing volume of holiday mail began to flow through the otherwise tiny post office each year, ultimately becoming so substantial that it caught the attention of Robert Ripley in 1930. Ripley featured the town’s post office in his nationally-syndicated “Believe It or Not” cartoon. The town would never be the same again.

The Ripley feature brought unprecedented national media attention to Santa Claus, Indiana, and flooded its now-famous post office with holiday mail. Companies arranged to have large holiday mailings sent through Santa Claus to receive the magic postmark. In 1931, the post office geared up for a 1 million piece mailing promised by a big corporation, only to have the company cancel at the last minute. The Postmaster General was so outraged that he threatened to force the town to change its name; a threat that was quickly met with strong public opposition. In the end, Santa Claus, Indiana’s post office was not only reassured of its continued operation, it was also informed that it would begin receiving all letters addressed to “Santa” which were previously being sent to the dead letter office. The highlight of 1931 was the mailing of a giant Christmas card to Robert Ripley.

By 1932, Santa Claus, Indiana’s national fame had caught the attention of entrepreneur Milton Harris. Together with Postmaster Jim Martin, he created the vision for “Santa Claus Town”, a place where Santa would live and work year-round. It was to be an extraordinary place unlike any other, where children’s fairy-tales would come to life. Harris quickly leased 1,000 acres, which was most of the land in and around the town, then began securing sponsorships from national toy and candy manufacturers.

The Curtiss Candy Company of Chicago, creators of the Baby Ruth and Butterfinger candy bars, was the first company to invest in Harris' project. Curtiss sponsored construction of the "Candy Castle", the first building in Santa Claus Town. The Candy Castle, a red brick building with all the elements of a real castle, looked as though it was lifted right from the pages of a fairytale.

The Candy Castle was dedicated amidst tremendous fanfare on the cold and snowy day of December 22, 1935. Thousands attended the formal dedication ceremony, which was broadcast live from the Candy Castle by radio station WGBF of Evansville. It was a truly a grand affair that marked the opening of the first tourist attraction in Santa Claus, Indiana, and the first themed attraction in the United States.

With the launch of the Candy Castle an overwhelmingly success, Harris was eager to continue bringing his vision of Santa Claus Town to life. In 1936, he built the Toy Village on land adjacent to the Candy Castle. One of the most magical places in the Toy Village was Santa's Workshop, where wide-eyed children could watch Santa building toys and could play with the most popular toys of the day. The Toy Village also featured over a half-dozen miniature fairytale buildings each sponsored by a prominent toy manufacturer. Among them was the Lionel Train building, the Daisy air-rifle shooting gallery, and the Doll Furniture House. An official seal, known as the "Santa Claus Seal of Approval" was adopted and used on products displayed in Santa Claus Town. Retail giant Marshall Fields arranged for toys purchased at their Chicago store to be shipped from Santa Claus, Indiana for the magic seal and postmark.

Santa Claus Town was significant in many ways. From a national perspective, it was the first themed attraction in the United States, made unprecedented use of corporate sponsorship, and generated significant national media attention for the tiny rural town. Locally, it directly led to the creation of the town's first newspaper, The Santa Claus Town News, was responsible for the establishment of the Santa Claus Chamber of Commerce, and provided additional employment opportunities and increased tourism for the local economy. Unfortunately, the significance of Harris' attraction quickly caught the attention of what would soon become a fierce rival.

Even before the dedication of the Candy Castle occurred, Harris' project had already drawn the attention of another entrepreneur. In 1935, Carl Barrett, the Chicago head of the Illinois Auto Club, came to town with plans for creating a "Santa Claus Park". Driven primarily by contempt for Harris' project, Barrett bought much of the land in and around the town of Santa Claus. Barrett believed his ownership would void the lease agreements that Harris held on much of the property.

In a bold move meant to upstage Harris, Barrett erected a giant Santa Claus statue on the highest hill in town. He extensively promoted the statue, billing it as being 25 feet tall and constructed from 40 tons of solid granite. On December 25, 1935, Barrett dedicated his granite statue to the children of the world in a melodramatic speech which indirectly references Harris' "commercialism". In perhaps one of the greatest ironies, cracks later developed in the statue revealing that it was made of concrete. Barrett's claim that the statue was solid granite proved to be as dubious as his earlier claim of the fallen meteor on the property.

Harris wasted no time responding. Within a week of the statue's dedication, a lawsuit had been filed seeking an injunction against Barrett. A court ruling affirmed that the cement Santa was on Harris-controlled property and issued an injunction preventing Barrett from as much as selling a postcard of his statue. This lawsuit, the first of several, was appealed all the way to the Indiana State Supreme Court. The legal wrangling of these two Santa Claus-themed entities was followed closely by the national media, with publications such as Newsweek and Business Week providing frequent updates on the story of "Too Many Santa Clauses". While small legal victories were occasionally claimed by either side, a clear winner never emerged in the litigation which dragged on into the 1940s.

Although costly both in legal fees and negative publicity, the litigation alone was not enough to sink the rival promoters. But then came the onset of World War II, bringing with it a host of additional challenges. The tourist base was further reduced by limited gasoline supplies and the rationing of tires, and sponsors were lost as many companies shifted production from toys to war supplies. Santa Claus Town became a shadow of what it once was. Harris pressed on and managed to keep the attraction open through the war and for several years after.

Unfortunately, the great many challenges he faced over the years had really taken their toll. In 1950, the visionary entrepreneur Milton Harris passed away, his dream never fully realized.

Both the Candy Castle and Toy Village remained open to the public over the next few decades, with several new owners attempting to carry on variations of Harris' vision. But the magic had been lost. In the 1970s, both properties were closed to the public and were rezoned for other uses. The Candy Castle became a private residence. In the Toy Village, Santa's Workshop served first as a church and then later as multi-family housing. All but one of the miniature fairytale buildings was razed. By 2005, the remaining properties sat vacant, in a dismal state of disrepair. The magical fantasyland that had once been loved by thousands had become all-but-forgotten.

As the years passed by, though, it seemed less and less likely that anyone would come galloping in to save the deserted properties of Santa Claus Town. But that's often how fairy tales go – help arrives when least expected. There is little doubt that the May 2005 announcement that the Candy Castle had been purchased came as a complete surprise to most everyone. Local company St. Nicholas Development, LLC had purchased the historic Candy Castle and immediately applied for commercial rezoning of the property – which was approved in July. Yet another surprise came in October when the company announced that it had purchased The Toy Village property and had already applied for its rezoning as well. Was Santa Claus Town making a comeback? Yes! The Candy Castle re-opened in the summer of 2006.

The Rest of the Story 12/24/92

Never in history did a town have so much trouble naming itself than the town of...well that, see that was the problem. The town didn't have a name--not even an unofficial one. There were many suggestions, but every time somebody made a suggestion, it was discovered that some other town already had that name.

How did the folks find their way to the "nameless town"? Well, people who lived on the gently rolling hillscape of southern Indiana would simply point and say, "Over yonder is the 'nameless town.'" So that's exactly what they came to call it until one Friday night, late in 1852, on Christmas Eve. And this is The Rest of the Story...

The Christmas Eve service had just concluded in the little log church, and everybody was there. [It was] as good a time as any to hold a final town meeting of the year, one citizen decided. As had often been the case through the years of town meetings since the community's founding, there was only one order of business that night: a name for the "nameless town."

All were gathered around the pot-bellied, wood-burning stove. The circuit riding preacher, who had just preached the service, was there, too. He was a popular fellow—the Reverend Christian Wyttenbach. So esteemed was this minister that somebody suggested naming the town Wyttenbach, Indiana. But I think it was the reverend himself who respectfully declined; after all he didn't even live there.

The frustrating discussion continued. Now when I mention "everyone there," I mean everybody; children--although quiet and not participating--children were included. But then, with a chilly December gust, the door of the church blew open. It was the adults who fell silent and it was the youngsters who suddenly came to life. For beyond the picture-framed doorway was a magical scene of snowflakes winking on black velvet, and the magical sound of sleigh bells. But whose sleigh might it be? All were present, remember--and nobody else for miles and miles around except...that's right. And as the children ran to the doorway they excitedly shouted the name that every grownup was thinking, "Santa Claus!" they cried. "It's Santa Claus!"

Thus one Christmas Eve, 140 years ago tonight, because of some bells that nobody's ever been able to trace, the little nameless town received its name: Santa Claus, Indiana; and it is so named to this day. The population no longer numbers in the dozens--there are 1,200 residents now. And in a sense you might say that there is 12-hundred-and-one. For each and every Christmas season, hundreds of thousands of letters arrive in the town's post office. Letters come from all over the world with but a single name inscribed upon them. The inscriptions are often scrawled in crayon, but the letters are sent in utmost sincerity. Of course, you know what the name is on all those envelopes, and you know why those letters arrive where they do 'cause, well, because you know The Rest of the Story.

A Visit from St. Nicholas

-Clement Clark Moore



'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;

"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of Toys, and St. Nicholas too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot; A
bundle of Toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

His eyes -- how they twinkled! his dimples how merry! His
cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry! His droll little
mouth was drawn up like a bow And the beard of his chin
was as white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work, And
filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk, And laying
his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle,
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,

"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night."

Some Personal Thoughts...

Charles Howard once stated that “being Santa Claus is a privilege and an honor.” Charles was right in all aspects of his statement. When a person takes on the persona of Santa Claus or Mrs. Claus, they step into a life that is steeped with legend, folklore, and tradition. The window of opportunity to be Santa Claus in one’s own life is short, with a few exceptions, and is a gift.

How is being Santa a gift? Somehow, some way, a person gets a calling from some power that drives that individual to seek out the enjoyment of being Santa. This calling can come at any time in life...I am proof of that. This calling is the gift.

The gift may come to you in your teenage years, your forties or like most in your fifties. How it starts is as unique as the individual who receives the gift of being Santa. The gift becomes the spirit that dwells and lives in your heart. It

The gift of being Santa Claus started with the birth of a child some 2,000 years ago and then continued with St. Nicholas. The gift evolved throughout the centuries as history blended with legend that developed into folklore. Then in 1890, James Edgar became the first known department store Santa. Over 120 years later, tens of thousands all across the World have taken up the gift of being Santa.

Being Santa is truly a gift, a gift that has passes from generation to generation. The gift has no one owner and is not given without sacrifice. Being Santa Claus is a gift to be cherished...and it is a gift that is only ours to borrow. When our days upon this earth are done, the gift will leave us and pass into part of our individual collective being, along with our other earthly endeavors. But be assured that the gift of being Santa will continue...as long as we in the Santa community today believe in the true Spirit of Christmas.

I would also like to take this time to thank all that have participated in the many Santa events that were held in 2012. January saw hundreds of Santas gather in Southern California, in March hundreds came back to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and in April hundreds came to Santa Claus, Indiana. Thank you to all who planned these events and those who attended them.

Regional and local Santa gatherings happened each month in 2012 also. From the Northeastern Santas to the Buckeye Santas to the Palm Tree Santas to the Santa groups of the Midwest to the Lone Star Santas to the Santa groups of the West Coast...the brotherhood was alive and well. Santa Schools were in full force also...from the Charles W. Howard Santa Claus School to the International University of Santa Claus to the Denver Santa School to Victor Nevada’ Santa School to Santa Claus Academy to the newly inaugurated St. Nicholas Institute. Thanks to all who were involved.

Thanks to all who participate here at ClausNet and a special thank you to Michael Rielly for your vision of the Santa Claus Network. I wish all a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

In the Spirit of Christmas,

Phillip L. Wenz





Santa Claus Oath

I will seek knowledge to be well versed in the mysteries of bringing Christmas cheer and good will to all the people that I encounter in my journeys and travels.

I shall be dedicated to hearing the secret dreams of both children and adults.

I understand that the true and only gift I can give, as Santa, is myself.

I acknowledge that some of the requests I will hear will be difficult and sad. I know in these difficulties there lies an opportunity to bring a spirit of warmth, understanding and compassion.

I know the "real reason for the season" and know that I am blessed to be able to be a part of it.

I realize that I belong to a brotherhood and will be supportive, honest and show fellowship to my peers.

I promise to use "my" powers to create happiness, spread love and make fantasies come to life in the true and sincere tradition of the Santa Claus Legend.

I pledge myself to these principles as a descendant of St. Nicholas the gift giver of Myra.

Mrs. Santa Claus Pledge

As Mrs. Santa Claus I solemnly pledge myself, in the Spirit of St. Nicholas, to maintain and advance my vocation as a conveyor of the true meaning of Christmas to all that I may meet in my journeys and travels. I will devote myself in bringing a loving loyalty to the Santa Claus Legend and will do all in my power to encourage the sentiment that it is truly better to give than to receive. I will use my knowledge and love for Christmas to be a part of the magic of the Season and to be partners with Santa Claus in bringing a Loving, Joyful, and Happy Holiday to all. I will seek to see the enchanting wonder of each new day and seek to see that wonder in each child's eyes that I visit. I know that being Mrs. Santa Claus is a gift that I can give to children of all age and by undertaking this role I promise to create special memories, to the best of my abilities, for all that I shall encounter.

The Elf Pledge

As an Elf of the mystical and traditional Spirit of Christmas, I do hereby affirm that I shall help spread the magic and folklore this is a part of the Santa Claus Legend. I will act as an emissary of love, hope, and charity. I will always remember the true meaning of the Season by giving of myself to each child or adult to whom I encounter. I will take my role seriously honestly and faithfully. I pledge myself to these principles as an Elf to Santa Claus, the ambassador of St. Nicholas the gift giver of Myra.

Claus Net

The Santa Claus Network

Through the Eyes of a Child

I remember being almost three when I sat upon Santa's knee.
He was a lot bigger than I had imagined him to be.
As I sat there I started to cry, really not knowing the reason why.
He was nice, jolly, tender, and mild... I was too young to realize all the while,
I had just met Santa through the eyes of a child.

When I got older and went to school, some of the other children told me that I was being fooled. "Santa is not real." some of my friends said, "Your parents put out the toys when you fall asleep in bed." I asked my big brother what he thought about what I heard. "Of course Santa is real." He reassured. On Christmas morning there was no doubt, Santa had come with presents all about.
I saw the belief in Santa through the eyes of a child.

Years later, married, with a family of my own, I experienced a part of Christmas that only a parent knows. Each of our children has a wish from Santa for Christmas Day; they want books, candy, and toys for play. We tell them to be good, behave, and don't fight, for Santa is watching you all day and all night. When the big day comes and the moment arrives, my children wake me up in the morning at a quarter of five. I saw the magic of Santa through the eyes of a child.

Now that I am older with my children all grown, each of them now has a family and a house of their own. We gather each December to celebrate our traditions with stories, stockings, and cookies in the kitchen. I as sit in my rocker, getting ready to read, my youngest granddaughter crawls upon my knee. "Twas the night before Christmas..." as the poem goes; I look at all my granddaughter with her face all a glow. I see something in her eyes from a long, long time ago...I see the legacy of Santa through the eyes of a child.

-Phillip L. Wenz

Merry Christmas