

ClausNet

The Santa Claus Network

CLAUSNET GAZETTE

A special interview with the
1st Lady of Christmas
Mary Ida Doan

December 24, 2013

55 years of
Santa's Village

ClausNet creator
Michael Rielly

Upcoming Events

Santa History and Legends

And much more...



5th Annual Christmas Eve Edition



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, Sinterklaas, 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.

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. Wenz



*The International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas
wish to dedicate this special Christmas Eve Issue
in Memoriam to*



Santa Rob Figley



Remembering the Reason for the Season

When we go shopping,
we say, "How much will it cost?"
Then the true meaning of Christmas,
Somehow becomes lost.

Amidst the tinsel, glitter
and ribbons of gold,
we forget about the child,
born on a night so cold.

The children look for Santa
In his big, red sleigh
never thinking of the child
whose bed was made of hay.

In reality,

When we look into the night sky,
we don't see a sleigh
but a star burning bright and high.
A faithful reminder,
of that night so long ago,

And of the child we call Jesus,
whose love the world would know.

*for Unto Us
a Child
is Born*



An Interview with Mary Ida Doan

Our special guest for this Christmas Eve edition of the ClausNet Gazette is none other than the 1st Lady of Christmas and the North Pole; Mary Ida Doan!

About Mary Ida Doan...

For decades, Mary Ida Doan, has been making spirits bright as Bay City's own Mrs. Claus.

Mary Ida is a co-founder of Bay City's Santa House and was honored in 2012 by being the first Mrs. Santa Claus inducted into the International Santa Claus Hall of Fame.



It is said that behind every great man is a great woman. Truly, behind Santa is Mrs. Claus. For Charter Hall of Fame Member, the late Nate Doan, that woman was his wife, Mary Ida Doan. For over 50 years she has been bringing Mrs. Claus to life. With an unstoppable Christmas Spirit and a deep passion to help others she has made her mark as one of the leading Mrs. Clauses in the world. The Doans were the first couple to graduate from the Charles W. Howard Santa School in Albion, New York. Together they would work nearly 380 events every Christmas season. Mary Ida is a co-founder of the Nate and Mary Ida Doan Santa House in Bay City where thousands visit each season to talk with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Even today she continues to make the hearts of children of all ages happy and is fully deserving of her title – Michigan's Mrs. Santa Claus.

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

Mary Ida: I graduated from Charles W. Howard Santa School in October of 1958. I got into it because I married Santa in 1957. I hardly ever got to see him, we were married November 23, went to Albion, NY for our honeymoon, came home the night before Thanksgiving and he started to work the day after Thanksgiving and he would be working every day and night, came home exhausted and would fall into bed. "OH boy married life is going to be interesting". If you can't fight him you join him.



ClausNet: What do you enjoy the most about portraying and being Mrs. Santa Claus?

Mary Ida: Making children happy and answering their questions.

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

Mary Ida: I think my favorite part of Christmas Season is working at the Santa House and seeing the looks on the children's faces.

ClausNet: What is your favorite color?

Mary Ida: My favorite color is pink. I know it should be red, but pink looks great on me!!

ClausNet: What are your favorite foods?

Mary Ida: My favorite food is FOOD. I like it all.

ClausNet: Tell us about the Nate and Mary Ida Doan Santa Claus House in Bay City, MI.

Mary Ida: The Nate and Mary Ida Doan Santa House was founded in 1991. Friends of Bay City thought there should be a Santa House in Bay City, in our honor. It is a log cabin built in 1918, logs are all numbered, in the event we had to take it down and put it back together for some reason. (Heaven forbid we could do it. It is 40 x 44 building, decorated beautifully. Santa is there every evening from 6:00 to 8:30 P.M. and weekends from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. and 6:00 to 8:30 P.M. We open Saturday after Thanksgiving and close December 22nd. We average between 11,000 to 12,000 people during our season. We have live reindeer, the children love feeding them.



ClausNet: Coke or Pepsi?

Mary Ida: I love Coke (diet-caffeine free).

ClausNet: What is your favorite cookie?

Mary Ida: My favorite cookie is Chocolate Chip.

ClausNet: What keeps you busy when you are not doing Santa related activities?

Mary Ida: I stay busy all year long. In February I am in charge of the phone room for a telethon for our 4th of July Fireworks Festival its 3 days long. I am a Volunteer Coordinator for the actual Fireworks Festival in July. I work concerts in the park in the summer for Santa House, when we work concerts they give us a nice donation, because we are a non-profit organization. I am active at church. My Red Hat Ladies and I decorate Christmas Trees for our veterans and our Troops, doing 100 trees a year. This year we delivered 50 to our local Veteran Hospital. They are about 2 feet tall, they have them in their rooms for the season.



ClausNet: What profession would you like to attempt?

Mary Ida: What profession would I like to attempt is retirement HA-HA. I am 75 and my body is beginning to say ENOUGH.

ClausNet: What profession would you *not* like to attempt?

Mary Ida: Would not like to do anything that I would have to stand on my feet all day. Hips won't let me. (Too Old)

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

Mary Ida: My most memorable experience of Santa while growing up was hearing my letter to Santa read on the radio and then going to a Department Store and have a personal visit WOW!!

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

Mary Ida: We would only get one thing for Christmas per child, plus fruit, nuts, and candy. It was usually a new doll. My brother had tinker toys, erector set, we built lots of things. Everybody had the same kind of Christmas at that time so we weren't any different. We didn't have Christmas like the children have today.

ClausNet: What was the last book that you read?

Mary Ida: The last book I read was His Winter Rose by Lois Richer, Love/Inspiration I read mostly that kind all the time.

ClausNet: What is your favorite movie?

Mary Ida: My favorite movie is My Fair Lady. I love musicals.

ClausNet: Do you have a favorite Christmas movie?

Mary Ida: My favorite Christmas movie is Its a Wonderful Life and White Christmas.

ClausNet: What is your favorite Christmas song?

Mary Ida: My favorite Christmas song is Winter Wonderland.

ClausNet: What are your hobbies / interests?

Mary Ida: My hobbies are doing trees for the troops, Sending Santa to Afghanistan. Interests are volunteering.



ClausNet: Tell us about Nate and his Santa career.

Mary Ida: He first portrayed Santa at Church in 1951. Santa got sick and they approached Nate, they said you are the only one with a big belly, he finally was convinced to do it. Had a ball with the kids. The following year he had 2 jobs then it grew and grew. In 1953 a friend worked for a large Department Store chain and got a card in the mail about a school in New York to teach Santas (yeah right). It was CWH school. He went and fell in love with it and the rest is history. It got bigger and bigger every year. More and more appointments. We ended up doing about 230 appearances in a season, all public and parochial schools, lodges, pre-schools, nursing homes. He worked at a toy store (as Santa) the month of December plus all of our private parties.

In May 1966 Charles W. Howard passed away and it was his wish that we carry on the school, we did then until 1990. Nate's health began to decline so we had to lighten our load. He eased out of the school and we turned it over to one of our students, Tom and Holly Valent in Midland, Michigan. That is where it is today. We truly had a wonderful marriage, he was a loving father and husband. He passed away May 1997.

ClausNet: What were Charles and Ruth Howard like?

Mary Ida: Charlie and Ruth Howard were great friends, Ruth was a very prim and proper, very serious person and then there was Charlie, he enjoyed life to the fullest. He was a very warm and loving gentleman. He would give you the shirt off his back literally. We would see them 3 or 4 times a year, enjoyed them a lot.

Ruth (Mother Howard as we called her) came and stayed with us every summer for a week or 10 days, she loved to travel, so while she was here, she and I would get in the car and go. We visited Western part of Michigan and then we had a Santa at Coldwater, Michigan we went to see them too on occasion. He had live reindeer, we truly loved the Howards. If we could have chosen anyone other than our own fathers, Charlie would have been our choice. He has a high place in heaven.



ClausNet: What was Christmas Park like?

Mary Ida: Christmas Park was a wonderful park. We took our children there and they always thought that was the North Pole, Santa was there, the toy shop, Mrs. Claus and Mrs. C kitchen etc. When our children were young Santa (Charlie) asked us in front of our children if we would like to be one of his helpers, we ask the boys what do they think about us being a helper, yeah, yeah they said, you must never tell anyone it has to be kept a secret, could you keep a secret? Well they did quite well, so the park has wonderful memories for us. They enjoyed the rides, of course they got some special attention too. It is too bad it couldn't have continued.

ClausNet: Have you ever reflected on the history that Nate and yourself represent to the Santa Claus Community?

Mary Ida: We feel we have been truly blessed. I am seeing grandchildren of the children we saw as little ones. You know you really don't think a lot about it. Then you get these adults that you run in to throughout the year and they love to reflect on some of the things we said at brought them or when we visited them at their homes. We did whole family parties (same families) year after year and we remember so many funny things or "I remember when you made me eat my peas the night you came to our house" these "kids" are 50 or 60 now. I guess people really thought a lot of us. We have so many great memories. We had to visit a family in the summer because their child had leukemia and wasn't going to last to see Christmas, those are tough calls to make, but you go in and swallow hard and do your job as if everything was good and try to make everybody's Christmas a memorable one. It's great to walk down the street and people will say, aren't you Mrs. Claus, we have so many great pictures, when you came to Grandma's house. Santa had Busia sit on his lap for a picture, which was her last Christmas, we cherish those pictures, yes we have fantastic memories. The community has thanked us in so many ways. They have been very good to us. Again you don't really think much about what you did, people appreciate all of the time we gave them. That's enough for us.





In some of our arrivals around the Country we have worked in 14 states in the US. Did openings for Malls, etc. We arrived by Dog Sled, Poofed in by a Magician, fire trucks and boat. In Australia in 1967, 1978, and 1980 beautiful floats, royal coronation coach, a 1922 Hispano Suizo (touring car). We had school for Father Christmas in Australia. The children had never seen Mrs. Claus before they thought I was Santa's Grandmother (he never told them the difference). Great, great memories. We have been blessed. Nate and Mary Ida Doan Santa House is the Best "Thank-you for all the years we put into each Christmas season. Nate always said if the children had as much faith in God as they do in Santa Claus what a wonderful world we would have.

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

Mary Ida: What would St. Nicholas say about our Christmas? That's an interesting question. He would be shocked at what the children ask for and most times get, to think he gave a few coins to the children. I am not sure he would agree with the way the children are asking for so much. How times have changed.

God Bless everyone. Hope everyone has a happy, healthy, and blessed Christmas!!!

Mrs. Claus...Mary Ida Doan

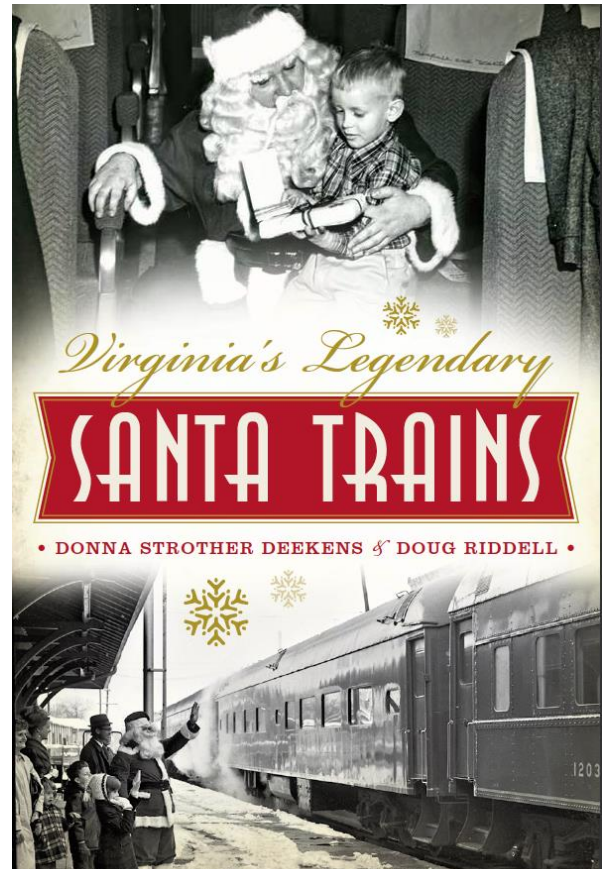


Virginia's Legendary Santa Trains

EXCERPT FROM VIRGINIA'S LEGENDARY SANTA TRAINS
BY DONNA STROTHER DEEKENS AND DOUG RIDDELL

Few things are more endearing than memories of the Miller & Rhoads Santa Claus Trains that departed Richmond's Broad Street Station on cold December Saturdays between 1957 and 1971. Operated by the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad, they stopped in Ashland to pick up the store's Santa — the *real* one — and his Snow Queen.

From the moment the steel wheels began to turn, fabled blind musician Charlie Wakefield led Saint Nick's entourage through coaches filled with holiday revelers belting out Christmas favorites. Small children, anxiously waiting to speak with their hero, were treated to coloring books and candy canes by his elves. Upon the return to the enormous John Russell Pope-designed transportation cathedral, Santa magically appeared atop one of the large oaken waiting room benches, urging everyone to visit him downtown at Miller & Rhoads' Tea Room. They could afterward sit in his lap in Santaland, posing for annual portraits that are considered family heirlooms in most Richmond homes.



Spending hours ogling the Lionel trains scurrying about the labyrinth of tunnels, bridges and towns in Miller & Rhoads' Fifth and Grace Streets corner display window or dreaming of becoming a Snow Queen, was literally a Christmastime rite of passage for young girls and boys in 1950s Richmond. When the two of us considered co-writing a Santa Train book, our only hesitation came when wondering if Richmonders would willingly surrender their memories for publication. Would there be enough material for a book? A good magazine article, yes; but a book? We agreed nonetheless. After all, it was simply a local tale — or so we thought.

Never assume anything when setting out to write. *Never.*

Our first and most shocking discovery was that the Santa Train concept didn't originate with Miller & Rhoads. Credit goes to Jacqueline Andrews, a business partner in Cox Incorporated, which operated a nearly one-hundred-year-old small family-owned Ashland department store, from 1955 until it closed in 1960.



Even though we'd both grown up in the area, neither of us had ever heard of "Mr. Cox's Department Store," as it was lovingly called. Both of us *had* dined at the Iron Horse Café, which, as it turned out, occupies the one-hundred-year-old brick building that once housed Cox's. Mrs. Andrews asked Bob Jeffers (who would later open the fabled Smokey Pig Restaurant) to become Ashland's Santa, making his grand arrival into town aboard a regularly scheduled RF&P passenger train. Greeted by a crowd estimated to exceed over half of Ashland's population, he walked across the street to the store, where he held court and posed for photos on Saturdays until Christmas.

In 1957, an amazing man named Eugene Luck, the assistant director of passenger traffic for the RF&P, suggested to Cox Incorporated that Ashland's children and their parents join Santa for a whirlwind, nonstop trip to Richmond and back aboard a special Santa Train. The promotion exceeded anyone's expectations.

When word of our book spread, [with] the possibility that the small store would finally assume its rightful place in the annals of Richmond-area retail promotion, doors opened too many of the picturesque antebellum homes on Railroad Avenue. We were welcomed by dainty ladies, then Henry Clay High School girls, who were picked as a "fairy princess" or as members of the school's band, to serve aboard the trains. They rushed to antique hutches and pulled out faded photos and dog-eared scrapbooks.

Gene Luck, as it turned out, marketed the idea of the Santa Train to Miller & Rhoads in Richmond (later, in Roanoke and Lynchburg), as well as to J.C. Penney in Alexandria. The Retail Merchants of Fredericksburg sponsored a Santa Train, as did American Legion Post #136 and J.C. Penney in Ettrick. A Santa Train was even operated one day only between Charlottesville and Orange over the Southern Railway in 1967. We soon found ourselves in a real life version of the children's game, Wack-A-Mole. We resolved one mystery only to be confronted with another.

Our growing fascination with the late Gene Luck resulted in a trip to Southampton County. We meet with his son, Bob, in Franklin. The elder Luck, a paper products sales executive in Richmond prior To 1955, traveled the hot dusty back roads of summertime Virginia and the Carolinas with a two-hundred-pound block of ice in the back floor of his 1937 Buick. In the floor, he'd drilled a hole to discharge leaking water. "We like to think that Dad invented automobile air conditioning."

Prompted by a story penned by Tidewater newspaperman H. Reid, we visited the nearby hamlet of Sedley. There, in the years following WWII, Santa boarded a Virginian Railway steam powered passenger train, just outside of town, while it took on coal and water. Rather than a commercial promotion, these children greeted Kris Kringle with canned goods for the needy and were treated to cartoons in Sedley's small theater. Afterward, town residents met to sing carols around a Christmas tree in the park – the very essence of the season. Virginian Railway passenger trains stopped running after 1951, the tracks vanished and the town has largely disappeared. The memories of that event however, remain the ties that bind that community together.



Norfolk Southern Corporation made available their extensive collection of historic images; CSX also aided us, but it was the contributions of individuals, families and groups, like Richmond's Old Dominion Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, that framed a storied tradition in this very personal context.

In Roanoke, Claudine Miller lived just long enough to share the story of escorting her son and her niece to ride the Santa Train. "It was such a wonderful time. Everyone had fun — adults and children as well. I can't understand why they don't still run them."

They do, though not on the grand scale we remember. But the joy in a youngster's eyes can't be measured. Memories are limitless, and through them, the Santa Train will chug along forever, one surely hopes.

Virginia's Legendary Santa Trains

\$19.99, 128 pp., paperback, pub. Oct. 8 by History Press, HistoryPress.net

Special thanks to Donna Strother Deekens for this submission to the ClausNet Gazette.

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).

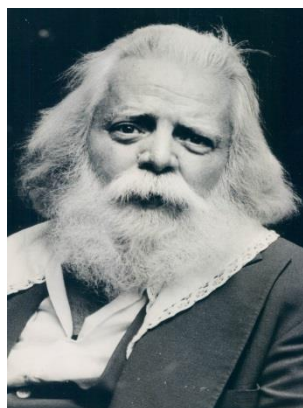
The International Santa Claus Hall of Fame Class of 2013



Lucky Squire
"The Ideal Santa"
Budapest, Hungary



Ed Butchart
"Stone Mountain Santa"
Stone Mountain, Georgia



Leroy Scholtz
"Santa C. Claus"
North Pole, New York



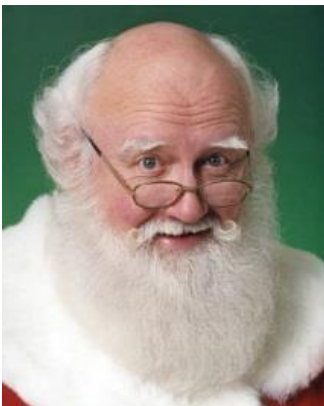
J. Paul Raines
"Claus Himself"
Phoenix, Arizona



Lucky Squire
"The Ideal Santa"
Budapest, Hungary
1898-1982

Santa Claus Hall of Fame
Class of 2013 – December 22, 2013

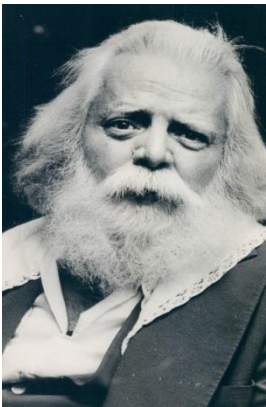
Lucky Squire was born in 1898 in Budapest, Hungary and came to the United States as a young man during WWI. In his early days, he worked as a laborer and took any odd jobs to help his family settle into New York City. In the 1940s Squire became a minister. When his moustache started to turn white he let his beard grow out and it began to attract attention...as he began to look like Santa Claus. In the 1950s through the late 1970s, Squire was one of the most sought after Santas in America. He worked for over a decade as the Gimbles Department Store Santa in New York, appeared with the world famous Radio City Rockettes, and was featured in many print advertisements for many major companies from around the country. He is most known for his modeling work with Ideals Magazine and for RCA and Capital Records. His last modeling job was in 1979 for Sports Illustrated. Squire also did promotional appearances for major toy manufactures like Ideal and Mattel.



Ed Butchart
"Stone Mountain Santa"
Stone Mountain, Georgia
1935-Current

Santa Claus Hall of Fame
Class of 2013 – December 22, 2013

Ed Butchart's journey into life as a professional Santa Claus came about unexpectedly. After completing 20 years with the USMC, he let his beard grow out. Soon people began to comment that he looked like Santa, and he received offers to play the role at various places. While he was in character at a mall, representatives from Atlanta's Stone Mountain Park took notice of him. They soon offered him the job as their official Santa. Since then he has gone on to author many books including "The Red Suit Diaries" and has been very active in the global Santa Claus community. A devout Christian, Butchart started a ministry called "Friends of Disabled Adults and Children" (FODAC) after helping a handicapped friend. The organization started out in his garage and today, FODAC has a 64,000 square foot warehouse filled with donated medical equipment that is fixed up and distributed to those in need. FODAC has delivered over 20,000 wheelchairs in 42 states and in 65 countries.



Leroy Scholtz
"Santa C. Claus"
North Pole, New York
1927-1985

Santa Claus Hall of Fame
Class of 2013 – December 22, 2013

Born on the Northwest side of Chicago, Leroy Scholtz's life traveled down many roads before embarking on a career as Santa Claus. A graduate of Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, Scholtz worked at many jobs such as enlisting in the US Army, working in retail stores, and delivering packages. He even attended a Lutheran seminary and cared for the mentally challenged. After losing a job around Christmas he took on the role of Santa for a Sears Department Store. This experience led him to a one year stint at both Santa's Workshop Theme Park in Colorado and Santa's Land Theme Park in North Carolina. In 1970 he was recruited by a third park, Santa's Workshop in North Pole, New York. He stayed with them for a decade. In 1980, Scholtz moved to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and began touring the country as Santa Claus for companies and organizations. He passed away on December 5, 1985, St. Nicholas Eve, in his hometown of Chicago (after suffering a heart attack.)



J. Paul Raines
"Claus Himself"
Phoenix, Arizona
1948-Current

Santa Claus Hall of Fame
Class of 2013 – December 22, 2013

It has been decades since J. Paul Raines first donned the red suit at a church program. He was hooked. Eventually he began making numerous appearances each Christmas Season. As the requests grew, he realized he could not keep up with them all and founded Santa Claus and Company to fill the demand. Raines began teaching Santa students a four hour course dubbed "Santa's Workshop 101" and supplying Santas to Phoenix, Las Vegas, and Denver. Besides his duties with Santa Claus and Company, he is very active in the world-wide Santa Claus Community, serving on many group boards, and is a mentor to many of the new Santas that join. He also appears many times a year for special events such as Christmas in July promotions. And as in the many years before, each Christmas Season, Raines dons the red suit for major holiday events with many local and state officials for tree lighting ceremonies, parades, and organizational appearances.

Upcoming Santa Event - ClausFest

Gatlinburg, Tennessee
March 2014

The ClausFest Team

Santa Charlie & Cindylu Thomas, Santa Ted & Vicki Jackson, Debra Ann Gabrelcik, Santa Doug Baird, Santa Eddie Burch, Santa Cliff Snider, Santa John & Joan Wilder, Trish Parris, and Lou & Loretta Knezevich.



[For more information click here](#)



Upcoming Santa Event – International Santa Celebration

Tampa, Florida
May 2014

Brought to you by the International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas.



We are having a party in Tampa!

Santas can be included in a chance to win a Junior Suite update or a Free Room Night. Read the contest information and register now.



The most affordable Registration Fee ever!

- Interactive Workshops and Seminars!
- 1 breakfast, 2 lunches & the Santa Banquet!
- All only \$138.00 per person!

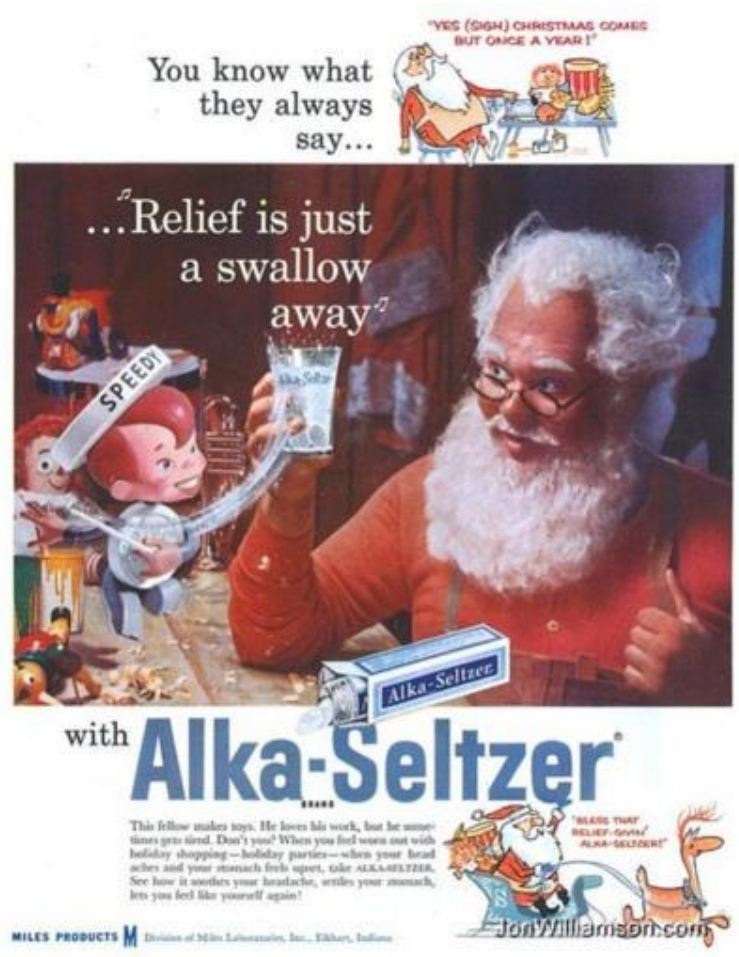
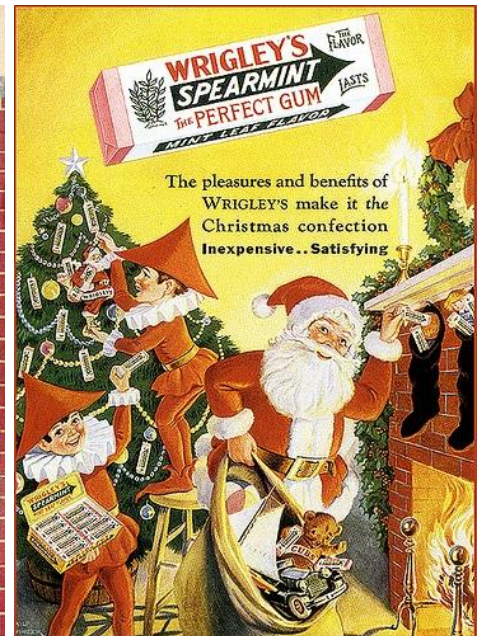
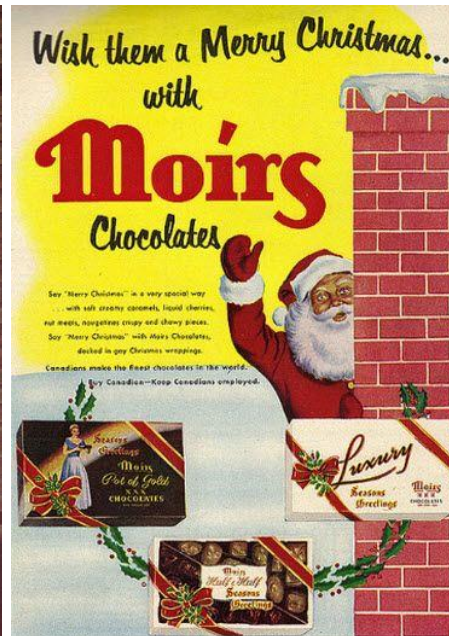
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Santa Claus in Advertising of the Past



Christmas is a Time for Reflecting

By Santa Lou Knezevich - Santa Lou is the creator of the Legendary Santas Mentoring Program and may be contacted at legendarysantasmentoringprog.com

Christmas Day brings the close of another Santa Season and the knowledge we have brought joy to so many people. There is also the bittersweet taste of waiting another year to put on the "Red Suit." I'm both happy and sad on this glorious day.

My mind wanders and memories of my childhood appear before me. I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio and December started the arctic temperatures which would last for the next few months. My mother would knit me mittens and attach them by a string through my sleeves, so I wouldn't lose them. I looked like Ralph's brother in the movie a "Christmas Story." This movie was filmed in Cleveland and always brings me home to my roots.

My parents emigrated from Yugoslavia and I am a first generation American. My Father kept the Serbian Orthodox tradition of "Sretan Bozic" which means Merry Christmas. This date occurs on the Georgian Calendar and usually is observed on January 7th. This was mainly a day of visiting with friends, feasting and hearing stories about their lives in days gone by,

We did of course celebrate December 25th and this was the day I always looked forward too because Santa Claus would make his visit.

My mother was an excellent cook and I can picture her now in a festive holiday apron, scurrying about the kitchen making sure everything would be done to perfection... Sometimes, I am reminded of those savory feasts my mother put on the table and the wonderful smells of our kitchen. Our house was usually the gathering place for Christmas dinner with my sister, her husband, my niece and nephew, my God Parents and friends of my parents. Mom always made a roast beef, plus a turkey and all sorts of vegetables; she and I would usually make the long trip into Cleveland visiting the famous Westside Market for meats, produce and special treats for our table.

My Christmas stocking held in it some hard candies, especially peppermints and a berry looking type which had a fruit center. There were some walnuts and other nuts for which you needed the nut cracker to break open those tough shells. My first experience seeing and eating a tangerine was at finding it in my Christmas stocking. The aromas of the tangerine and sweet tasting fruit were something I looked forward too. To this day, whenever I have a tangerine and uncover that first peel and the fragrance surrounds me, I am taken back to my childhood Christmas.

My dad was a proud man and wholly embraced America as his country. He had fled his country as a young man to avoid subscription into the army. He loved his family. He would often remind me we were a small family and here in America there was only my mother, sister and myself. He did live to see five grandchildren which made him very proud. I can see the smile on his face as I'm sure he has seen the family grow to 17 great grandchildren plus 10 great, great grandchildren.

He probably would have toasted us all with his favorite Christmas drink, Vernor's Ginger Ale and Southern Comfort. I thought I was a pretty big guy because each Christmas He made one of those drinks for me and wished me "Merry Christmas!" It took years for me to figure out my glass had 99.9% ginger ale and a splash of Southern Comfort. I seldom have alcohol but each Christmas I have some Southern Comfort and Vernor's Ginger Ale to toast the greatest father a kid could have.

Christmas is a time to reflect, to be thankful for our heritage and the wonderful memories in our minds. It is a time for many of us to relive a much slower time in which traditions and values were the mainstays of family life. I hope you will take a moment in the hustle and bustle of this season to relive in your mind the memories of your past Christmas's.

"Merry Christmas and Sretan Bozic" to each of my dear friends in the Red suit, may the joy and peace of God's grace shine upon you and yours.

From the desk of ClausNet creator Michael Rielly

I started the ClausNet Santa Claus Network (ClausNet) back in 2007. By the way – not “ClauseNet” (no ‘e’ in Santa Claus) or “Claus DOT Net” or “Clauset”. HA! I got the idea for ClausNet after the Charles W. Howard Santa Claus School in Midland Michigan.

Back in 2004, my wife signed me up for the school after she saw the school featured on the news. I remember thinking, what could I possibly learn from a “Santa Claus School”. At the time I had already been Santa for 16 years and really didn’t think there was anything else to learn. But I was wrong.

What I learned was that there were other Santas who had come before me – who practiced the same winks and gestures that I use today. And that there were others too – all over the country – all over the world – like me! One of the Santas I’ve gotten to know and one who I have learned so much from is Phil Wenz. I consider both he and my grandfather Santas I look up to.



Before the school, I never met another Santa Claus -- other than my grandfather of course. He was the only Santa I ever knew. I started out as Santa Claus in my third grade school play at the age of 8. I “played” Santa Claus on and off, but only really started taking the role seriously at 20.

Everything I knew about being Santa was from my childhood. I never really had a mentor or anyone to teach me how to be Santa. All I had were story books, television, and movies. Even though my grandfather was Santa Claus for 62 years, I never really had the opportunity to discuss the craft with him. All I had were memories of sitting on his knee. I remember his voice and how he always smelled like Christmas trees (it was artificial Christmas tree spray by the way – a trick I use to this day!)

Attending the school gave me the opportunity to discuss ideas, trade stories, and ask questions. But most of all, I made many new friends who all shared a common interest in the portrayal of Santa Claus. But what I loved most about the school was the camaraderie. I wanted to figure out an easy way to keep in contact with all my new friends and continue that sense of community after we all left the school.

Having spent my entire career in high-tech marketing, I was convinced there was a way to build a virtual meeting place where fellow men and women in red could meet, share stories, and discuss ideas. In a few short months after attending the school, I was able to build out a simple website with a forums section for discussing all things Santa Claus. Since that launch back in 2007, the site’s size has grown exponentially – both in features and membership and is now the largest community for Santas, Mrs. Clauses, Elves, and Reindeer Handlers!

The mission of ClausNet has always been to bring the Santa Claus community together for the purposes of building relationships. ClausNet provides the opportunity for its members to “meet” and interact with peers; network, mentor, and learn from one another. Members provide support, advice, and encouragement.

It’s been 42 years since I first put on the red suit yet I continue to learn something new from this community almost every day. The members, continual flow of information, and the abundant resources make ClausNet.com the greatest and largest Santa Claus community. ClausNet would not be the same without your contributions, opinions, viewpoints, and, yes, discourse. I want you all to know how much I love having you all here and would like to wish you a very merry Christmas and a blessed, safe, and Happy New Year!

ClausNet Members of the Month for 2013

JANUARY --- *From Tulsa, Oklahoma; Chris Capstone*

FEBRUARY --- *From Carlsbad, New Mexico: CarlsbadSanta*

MARCH --- *From Wooster, Ohio: Santa Jim North*

APRIL --- *From Dundalk, Ontario, Canada: FuzzyFootFarm*

MAY --- *From Warwick, Rhode Island: Santa Jim of RI*

JUNE --- *From Thetford, Norfolk, England: SantaMikeUK*

JULY --- *From Rumford, Rhode Island: Santa Bob Claus*

AUGUST --- *From 6 Mile, South Carolina; Santa Brian*

SEPTEMBER --- *From Marietta, Georgia: Santa Lou*

OCTOBER --- *From Beloit, Wisconsin: Santa Laureate*

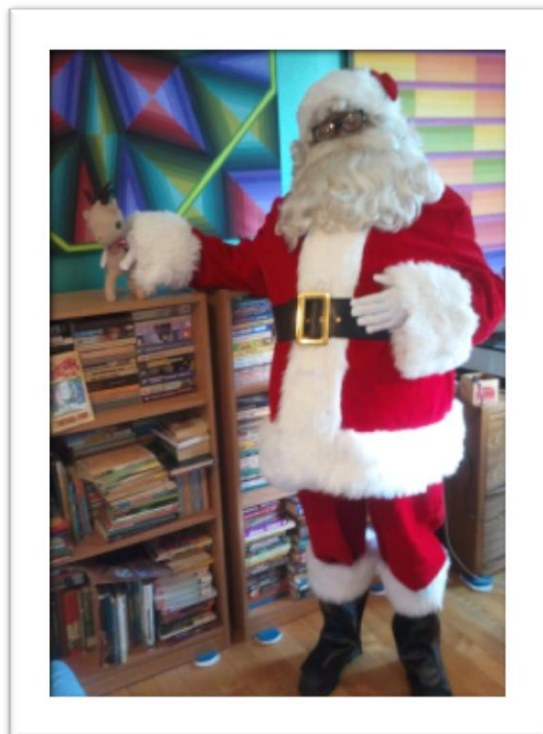
NOVEMBER --- *From Baltimore, Maryland: Santa Warren*

DECEMBER---*From New York City, New York: Elf Without Jingles*



Featured ClausNet Member of the Month for December

Elf Without Jingles – Santa Richard Washington



[Read the full interview on ClausNet](#)

A look at Clement C. Moore

— Marilyn F. Apseloff, Kent State University

Although Clement Clarke Moore wrote only one memorable poem for children, that narrative, "A Visit from St. Nicholas," has assured him of a secure place in the history of American letters. Moore wrote the poem for his own children and recited it to them on Christmas Eve 1822. After it was published anonymously the following year, it became increasingly popular, appearing in newspapers, school readers, other anthologies, and in many different single editions. It is still read today as a traditional part of the Christmas season in the United States and throughout the world.

Clement Clarke Moore was born in New York City, the son of the Reverend Benjamin Moore and Charity Clarke Moore. An only child, Clement was capably tutored at home by his father until he entered Columbia College; according to his biographer, Samuel White Patterson, he graduated in 1798 "at the head of his class, as his father had, thirty years earlier." In 1801 he earned his M.A. degree from Columbia: he was awarded an LL.D. in 1829. A very religious man, he gave a large portion of the land that he had inherited, part of his Chelsea estate and now called Chelsea Square, to the General Theological Seminary, where he was a professor of oriental and Greek literature from 1823 until he retired in 1850. At his retirement he purchased a house in Newport, Rhode Island, where he died on 10 July 1863.



During his lifetime Moore wrote on a variety of subjects. He produced a two-volume *A Compendious Lexicon of the Hebrew Language* (1809), a translation from the French of *A Complete Treatise on Merinos and Other Sheep* (1811), and the historical biography *George Castriot, Surnamed Scanderbeg, King of Albania* (1850). Throughout his life he also wrote poetry, which was published in the *Portfolio* and similar periodicals. *The New-York Book of Poetry* (1837), an anthology of works by New York poets, contained some written by Moore, including "A Visit from St. Nicholas," although "Anonymous" was still listed as the author. Not until 1844, when Moore's collection *Poems* was published, was "A Visit from St. Nicholas" acknowledged in print as having been written by Clement C. Moore, LL.D.

In 1813 Clement Moore married nineteen-year-old Catharine Elizabeth Taylor, with whom he eventually had nine children. There were various versions of how "A Visit from St. Nicholas" came to be written for the six Moore children who were born before Christmas 1822: perhaps the jingling harness of his sleigh that evening gave him his inspiration, or the description of St. Nicholas from Washington Irving's pseudonymous *History of New York* "by Dietrich Knickerbocker" (1809), or the anonymous poem "The Children's Friend" published the previous year describing "Old Santeclaus" who drives his reindeer "O'er chimney tops, and tracks of snow, To bring his yearly gift to you." Moore totally eliminated moralizing like that found in "The Children's Friend" (no harmful toys are left, such as cannons, swords, or rockets, and toys are left only for "good girls and boys" in the earlier poem), much to the delight of children ever since. Whatever the source of Moore's poem, apparently the physical model for St. Nicholas was a rotund Dutchman who lived nearby.

"A Visit from St. Nicholas" was written in rhyming anapests, a meter ideally suited to the subject. The vivid descriptions, especially of St. Nicholas and his reindeer, remain with the reader long after the poem has been read or heard. Here is sheer delight, for Moore was interested in entertaining his children, not in preaching to them. The eight tiny reindeer have been given names that trip on the tongue, but there is no listing of specific toys such as was included in "The Children's Friend," perhaps because Moore did not want to give his children any hints as to what gifts they would be receiving.

Since Clement Moore had written the narrative poem for his own family, he made no attempt to get it published. There are various reports about how the poem came to appear anonymously the following year in the *Troy (N.Y.) Sentinel*. Apparently the verses were transcribed by a houseguest who was either Miss Harriet Butler or a friend of hers; in either case, Miss Butler was most likely the person who sent the copy of the poem anonymously to the *Sentinel*. The editor, Orville L. Holley, published it on 23 December 1823, together with his praise of the poem and "his cordial thanks to whoever had sent him these Christmas verses." The poem was republished numerous times over the years, first in newspapers and other publications, and then in separate illustrated editions, the first of which appeared in 1848 with wood engravings by T. C. Boyd; the publisher was Henry M. Onderdonk of New York. Since that time dozens of editions have appeared; the poem has been translated all over the world and printed in braille and has inspired many illustrators and artists.

Because the poem was published anonymously and became very popular, other people tried to claim authorship. The claimant taken most seriously was Major Henry Livingston, Jr., whose great-grandson spent many years trying to establish Major Livingston as the author. Livingston had also written verses for his children, but he made no written mention of "A Visit from St. Nicholas" during his lifetime, nor had his friends heard of his connection with the verses. They were said to have been published in a Poughkeepsie newspaper long before they appeared in the *Troy Sentinel*, but no copies of the paper containing the poem have ever turned up. Several magazine and newspaper articles appeared, especially during the 1940s, questioning the authorship, but scholars continue to give the credit to Clement Clarke Moore.

A look at the American Image of Santa Claus



The American version of the Santa Claus figure received its inspiration and its name from the Dutch legend of Sinter Klaas, brought by settlers to New York in the 17th century.

As early as 1773 the name appeared in the American press as "St. A Claus," but it was the popular author Washington Irving who gave Americans their first detailed information about the Dutch version of Saint Nicholas. In his *History of New York*, published in 1809 under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, Irving described the arrival of the saint on horseback (unaccompanied by Black Peter) each Eve of Saint Nicholas.

This Dutch-American Saint Nick achieved his fully Americanized form in 1823 in the poem *A Visit From Saint Nicholas* more commonly known as *The Night Before Christmas* by writer Clement Clarke Moore. Moore included such details as the names of the reindeer; Santa Claus's laughs, winks, and nods; and the method by which Saint Nicholas, referred to as an elf, returns up the chimney. (Moore's phrase "lays his finger aside of his nose" was drawn directly from Irving's 1809 description.)

The American image of Santa Claus was further elaborated by illustrator Thomas Nast, who depicted a rotund Santa for Christmas issues of Harper's magazine from the 1860s to the 1880s. Nast added such details as Santa's workshop at the North Pole and Santa's list of the good and bad children of the world. A human-sized version of Santa Claus, rather than the elf of Moore's poem, was depicted in a series of illustrations for Coca-Cola advertisements introduced in 1931 that introduced and made the red Santa Suits an icon. In modern versions of the Santa Claus legend, only his toy-shop workers are elves. Rudolph, the ninth reindeer, with a red and shiny nose, was invented in 1939 by an advertising writer for the Montgomery Ward Company.

In looking for the historical roots of Santa Claus, one must go very deep in the past. One discovers that Santa Claus as we know him is a combination of many different legends and mythical creatures.

The basis for the Christian-era Santa Claus is Bishop Nicholas of Smyrna (Izmir), in what is now Turkey. Nicholas lived in the 4th century A.D. He was very rich, generous, and loving toward children. Often he gave joy to poor children by throwing gifts in through their windows.

The Orthodox Church later raised St. Nicholas, miracle worker, to a position of great esteem. It was in his honor that Russia's oldest church, for example, was built. For its part, the Roman Catholic Church honored Nicholas as one who helped children and the poor. St. Nicholas became the patron saint of children and seafarers. His name day is December 6th.

In the Protestant areas of central and northern Germany, St. Nicholas later became known as der Weihnachtsmann. In England he came to be called Father Christmas. St. Nicholas made his way to the United States with Dutch immigrants, and began to be referred to as Santa Claus.

In North American poetry and illustrations, Santa Claus, in his white beard, red jacket and pompom-topped cap, would sally forth on the night before Christmas in his sleigh, pulled by eight reindeer, and climb down chimneys to leave his Christmas gifts in stockings children set out on the fireplace's mantelpiece.

Children naturally wanted to know where Santa Claus actually came from. Where did he live when he wasn't delivering presents? Those questions gave rise to the legend that Santa Claus lived at the North Pole, where his Christmas-gift workshop was also located.

In 1925, since grazing reindeer would not be possible at the North Pole, newspapers revealed that Santa Claus in fact lived in Finnish Lapland. "Uncle Markus", Markus Rautio, who compared the popular "Children's hour" on Finnish public radio, revealed the great secret for the first time in 1927: Santa Claus lives on Lapland's Korvatunturi - "Ear Fell". The fell, which is situated directly on Finland's eastern frontier, somewhat resembles a hare's ears - which are in fact Santa Claus's ears, with which he listens to hear if the world's children are being nice. Santa has the assistance of a busy group of elves, who have quite their own history in Scandinavian legend.

Over the centuries, customs from different parts of the Northern Hemisphere thus came together and created the whole world's Santa Claus - the ageless, timeless, deathless white-bearded and red suited man who gives out gifts on Christmas and always returns to Korvatunturi in Finnish Lapland.

Since the 1950s, Santa has happily sojourned at Napapiiri, near Rovaniemi, at times other than Christmas, to meet children and the young at heart. By 1985 his visits to Napapiiri had become so regular that he established his own Santa Claus Office there rather than using a convenience like providing conference calls from the north pole. He comes there every day of the year to hear what children want for Christmas and to talk with children who have arrived from around the world. Santa Claus Village is also the location of Santa's main Post Office, which receives children's letters from the four corners of the world.





A letter from Santa Claus...

My Dear Friends,

After four years of being closed the new chapter in the history of Santa's Village began in October 2010 with the re-opening of the Park by Jason and Amy Sierpien of A Zoo To You, Inc. and property owner Sterling Bay Companies of Chicago. The magical restoration of Santa's Village Azoosment Park took over a year and has been truly remarkable. It will be one of the highlights in the now continuing story that is Santa's Village.

On Memorial Day, May 30, 1959, Mrs. Claus and I made Santa's Village in East Dundee, Illinois our official home. The Park was the third such village built by Glenn Holland of Arcadia, California: Skyforest, California 1955 was the first (closed 1998) and Scotts Valley, California in 1957 (closed 1979) was the second. The first few years, our Village in East Dundee was open 364 days a year. Over time the season was shorten to the more commonly known schedule.

A lot has changed in the 53 years since Santa's Village first opened. The Polar Dome Ice Arena, completed in February 1963, added a new state of the art ice rink to the property. The Dome had a huge inflatable roof that was at the time the largest in the world. Sadly a storm came through the area in 1966 and tore the space age material. A year later a flat roof was added.

Attractions of Santa's Village have come and gone. Some of you might remember the Christmas Tree Ride, the Pony Carts, and the Candy Cane Coaster. How about the Pumpkin Coach or the Swiss Toboggan? Some of the attractions have endured over time, such as Santa's House, the Tree House Slide and of course the landmark of the Park – the frozen NORTH POLE!

You might have worked at the Village over the years. Ride operators, shop workers, and food service hosts have added to the Park's history. In the early days, pixies and elves helped our little visitors. Later our helpers wore brightly colored shirts and shorts. It is amazing that more than 11,000 teenagers and adults have worked at Santa's Village.

Numerous people have contributed to the longevity of Santa's Village. Most of them have worked behind the scenes. We thank them for their talents and contributions: Owners - (1959) Santa's Village Corporation of California, Glenn Holland and General Contractor J. P. Henck, (1965) Durell Everding Management, (1972) Barney Clark and the Medina Investors, and (1978) North Pole Corporation: Hugh Wilson and Philip Oestreich.

Park General Managers – Charles L. Poe, Ray Van Royce, Jack Morningstar, and Don Holliman, who for over 40 years has been a part of Santa's Village and is, once again, the General Manager. Former employee Crystal Varney who worked at the Park for more than 30 years in venues such as group sales, personnel, and more recently as Director of Operations. My Santa predecessors – James L. Combs, Eric John Lavoie, and the wonderful Don Goers. Plus Alan Payne and others who filled in from time to time.

Santa's Village has welcomed over twenty million guests. Children of all ages have been entertained and memories have been made. Folks who visited us in 1959 have brought their children, grandchildren, and even some great grandchildren through our magical door. On behalf of past and current employees, management, and owners, I personally thank all of you that have made Santa's Village a childhood icon.

With our Warmest Regards to Children of all ages,

Santa Claus

A History of 55 years of Santa's Village

-Phillip L. Wenz

Santa's Village was born of a man, who as a child had no real Christmas. Glenn Holland grew up in California during the Great Depression. His parents died by the time he was 18 years old, leaving him to care for his younger sister. As a grown man Holland married and had children. As a father he tried to give his own children the type of Christmas that he only knew in his dreams.

In the early 1950s, struck with inspiration, Holland sat at his kitchen table one day and started to sketch his idea of a Christmas fairyland where all the magic of the Holiday would come to life. Holland developed this idea into a working plan and began finding investors for his project. He traveled the country selling his "Santa's Village" concept and eventually listed his new company, Santa's Village Corporation, on the California Stock Exchange.

The first Santa's Village opened in 1955, six weeks before Disneyland, in Skyforest near Lake Arrowhead in San Bernardino County, California. (Closed 1998)
A second Santa's Village opened in 1957 near Scotts Valley in Santa Cruz County, California. (Closed 1979)



With the success of the first and second Santa's Villages, Holland began scouting a third location in the Midwest. The Chicago area, home to two World's Fairs, birthplace of the Ferris Wheel, and a center of entertainment and culture was picked as the spot. A suburban location approximately 45 miles northwest of the city was chosen.



Glenn Holland with Inky the reindeer

Dundee, Illinois was a tiny little town with some local attractions and a few good restaurants. The community was surrounded by cornfields and a huge forest wildlife foundation area. The newly completed Northwest Tollway connected the small suburb to Chicago to the east and Rockford, Illinois to the west.

In April 1958, Holland entered into a 50 year land lease on 40 wooded acres of McGraw's Wildlife Foundation with Chicago businessman Edwin Eichler. The property, located on State Routes 25 and 72, was similar to the settings of Holland's two California endeavors. In September ground was broken; the third Santa's Village was born.

Santa's Village Corporation and general contractor Putnam Henck built Santa's Village Dundee, Illinois, in nine months at the cost of one million dollars. The Dundee park officially opened on Memorial Day Weekend in 1959 to large crowds. On hand to greet these visitors of all ages was Santa, Mrs. Claus, and numerous helpers dressed as pixies and elves. These pixies and elves operated rides, worked in shops, and served food to the public. Santa had a petting zoo with sheep, ducks, goats, and Penny Peck, the educated chicken. Children could ride a Mexican burro or in a sleigh pulled by real live reindeer from Unalakeet, Alaska. Other rides included a giant whirling Christmas Tree, gasoline-powered tractors, and the Tree House Slide. Children could see a puppet show at the Wee Puppet Theatre, a giant Jack-in-the-Box, and brightly-colored mushrooms dotted the landscape.



There was also Santa's Post Office, Reindeer Barn, and a Gingerbread House. Mrs. Claus made fresh candy daily in her Candy Kitchen. The Pixie Pantry served hotdogs, hamburgers, fries, and sodas. Santa's Toy Factory was also here by the magic pond. Wishing wells, toy soldiers, and outdoor displays could be seen. Music flowed from treetop speakers. There was even an egg-shaped hut for the Easter Bunny.

As you looked around the Village, you could see over a dozen log buildings, stores, and attractions. These buildings had pointed roofs strengthened by rafters. These log structures were brightly colored and had wonderful detail like gingerbread trim and surrealist features. They fit into the beautiful trees that are part of the Fox Valley region.

Santa's Village in the first few seasons was open 364 days a year. The layout of the "Village" stayed pretty much the same until an extensive expansion program, which began in early 1962, started to change the makeup of the park.

Arrow Development of California was contracted by Santa's Village Corporation to develop some new attractions for the park. Arrow was best known at the time as the company that built the Disneyland rides in Anaheim, California. The first major change came in the removal of the wishing well in the front of the park next to the Entrance House. Ground was broken in the spring of 1961 for the Dundee Village's most enduring attraction...The Snowball Ride. Advertised as the original Snowball Ride it was actually one of two Snowball Rides built. That same year the Scotts Valley's Santa's Village in northern California also had one installed.

The expansion also included the redevelopment of the Magic Train, which was relocated deeper into the forest setting of Santa's Village. A brand new C.P. Huntington engine was added along with an extension of the tracks. The new layout actually looped in and out of the parking lot. The Antique Car Ride was installed in the space vacated by the Magic Train.



The year 1962 saw the start of the biggest development in Santa's Village's history, The Polar Dome Ice Arena. The Polar Dome project was a major undertaking for Santa's Village Corporation. Part of the park's original layout had to be moved to make room for the 40,000 square foot ice arena. The first relocation was that of North Pole Plaza and Santa's House. They were moved into an empty space near the newly added Snowball Ride. Originally these two attractions sat near where center ice of the dome is today. They also relocated the Toy Soldier (Duck Pond) and the Jack-in-the-Box Snow Cone Stand. The Polar Dome project took a little more than a year to complete at the cost of \$350,000; a very tidy sum in the early 1960s.

The dome opened in February 1963 to national reviews. The original Polar Dome Ice Arena design sat 4,000 people and was the largest air-supported dome stadium in the world according to Guinness World Book of Records. Top name acts appeared in the dome such as the International Showtime Circus with Don Ameche. Magician Mark Wilson's Magic Land of Allakazam was presented and filmed in the dome for national audiences. Major sports like the National Olympic Speed Skating Competition (videotaped for ABC's Wide World of Sports), and the Chicago Black Hawks practice sessions and exhibition games were held. Numerous ice skating revues, hockey leagues, wrestling matches, concerts, and roller derby events filled out the entertainment.

Santa's Village was also a big hit in the movies. Between 1964 and 1966 three movie "shorts" were shot on location in the park by Florida based producer K. Gordon Murray. (1964's *Santa Claus and his Helpers*, 1966's ***Santa's Magic Kingdom***, and 1966's ***Santa's Enchanted Village***.) The featurettes used the park's employees and characters in the cast, as well as some of the Village's more noticeable props. These one-reel movies have not only been seen in the United States, but in Great Britain, France, and Mexico.

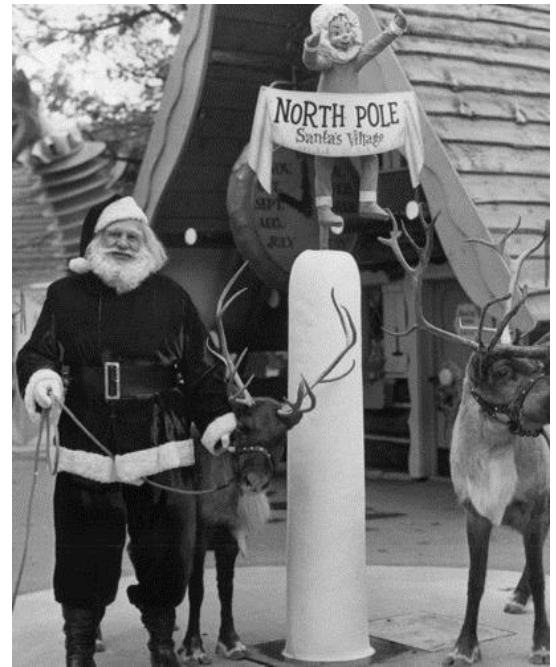
With all the expansion that Santa's Village Corporation was having in Illinois, Holland miscalculated the park's operating season. The two California Santa's Villages could operate 364 days a year. The Dundee park started out that way, but the Chicago area weather was so unbearable and unpredictable during the winter months that attendance was low. Santa's Village in Dundee was being put in the odd position of being closed at Christmas. Financial problems ensued.



The year 1965 saw the end of Santa's Village Corporation in Illinois. Glenn Holland sold the park and its Illinois assets to Adventureland owner Durell Everding, closing the chapter on the original owner of Santa's Village in Dundee, Illinois.

During the Everding era, Santa's Village continued to adapt and grow. The facility could operate year round but not simultaneously. Santa's Village would now open on Mother's Day in May and close the last weekend of October. The Polar Dome Ice Arena would open in September and close in April. Everding also had a plan of adding new rides that would attract older children, thus making the park a total family experience. It worked.

Sadly the "heydays" of the Polar Dome ended when a storm raced through the Dundee area in 1966 tearing open the skin of the inflatable dome and laying it across the inside of Santa's Village. The dome went through a major overhaul and remodeling. A flat roof was added a year later.



In early-1970 saw the passing of Durell Everding and a group of gentlemen known as the Medina Investors purchased the park. Barney Clark, the principal of the group kept the park in the same direction as that of Everding. To help "sell" this new and improved version of the park, the name was changed to the Worlds of Fun Theme Park.

The "Three Worlds" were Santa's World, the original area of the park, Old McDonald's Farm, which replaced the reindeer barn area, and the Coney Island section of larger rides and games of skill. The name "Three Worlds of Fun" never really caught on. Plus, another theme park in Kansas City, Missouri had a similar name. To avoid the confusion, management added Santa's Village to the name again, thus becoming The Three Worlds of Santa's Village.

The tenure of the Medina Investors was relatively short, as in 1978 the park was once again on the market for sale.

The year of 1978 saw two McHenry county business men take over the park. The North Pole Corporation had some new and bold ideas. They added a water and action park, Racing Rapids. The water park was one the first in the Midwest and the State of Illinois' largest when it opened in 1983.

The late 1980s into the early 1990s saw new growth in record attendance and in adding new and exciting attractions. Rides like the Galaxy Roller Coaster, the Balloon Race, and the YO-YO were opened. Outdoor shows and new eating facilities dotted the park's landscape.

The late 1990s saw the addition of the park's first looping coaster, the Typhoon. In 2003 the name of the park was shortened from The Three Worlds of Santa's Village back to Santa's Village Theme Park. Under the management of North Pole Corporation, the park headed into the 21st century and into a mile stone.

May of 2004 saw Santa's Village hit 45 years of Family Fun. Very few theme parks achieve this mile stone, and thus becoming a park of five generations of visitors. Santa's Village provides a way for children to experience some of the same attractions that their parents experienced as children.

At the close of the 2004 season, Sterling Bay Companies, a Chicago based real estate development firm, purchased the land on which Santa's Village sits. Rumors were spreading that Santa's Village would not reopen. On Mother's Day 2005 the park opened as usual. It would become Santa's Village's 46th and last season.

2005 also saw a group of Dundee businessmen calling themselves North Pole Village, L.L.C. approaching North Pole Corporation to buy the assets of Santa's Village along with the land that the park sits upon. The land lease held by North

Pole Corporation was set to expire in March 2008. If this deal was successful North Pole Village, L.L.C. would have put Santa's Village assets and land together for the first time in history. In June 2006 the deal was in default.

In August 2006 judgments against both North Pole Corporation and North Pole Village, L.L.C. was handed down by the Kane County circuit court. Both companies were evicted from the park property. Longtime owner North Pole Corporation held an October 2006 auction of the non-fixed assets. The infrastructure stayed in place. Sterling Bay Companies kept their options open as to the future of Santa's Village. In January 2007 the property was listed for sale and was closed to the public.

Many attempts to reopen Santa's Village were tried by numerous people and businesses in the few years that followed. There was even talk of moving parts of Santa's Village to a downstate location in Utica, Illinois. For a short time the property was used for flea markets and the Polar Dome for indoor soccer. But the true rebirth of Santa's Village was just around the corner.

As a teenager, Jason Sierpien of Marengo worked at Santa's Village in early 1990s. His experience at the park working in the barn area with the animals would lead him to form his own animal based business, A Zoo To You. Along with his wife Amy, the Sierpien's contracted the animals for the last two seasons the park would be open. In 2010, needing more space, they contracted with property owner to lease space at Santa's Village.

At the same time, part of the property was being developed as a paintball facility that would become known as Paintball Explosion. This left the main section of the property, where most of the buildings stood, available for a new concept in family entertainment; The Azoosment Park.

Sierpien combined his petting zoo with rides, added educational animal shows, and started to rebuild the park. To help bring all the intangibles together, he brought back some key management employees and interjected some new staff to bring freshness to the project. By the fall of 2010, Santa's Village Azoosment Park was ready to open.

The positive feedback to the reopening of the park in the abbreviated first season was outstanding. The following three seasons Santa's Village Azoosment Park continued to grow and added more attractions. The park is keeping with some of its historical roots for the nostalgic and adding bigger rides for the new generation of visitors.





Hail to the North Pole

Hail to the North Pole...

where a magical workshop lies...at the top of the world where reindeer can fly.
Elves make toys, they make candies too...it's all for the child in you.

North Pole always keeps the Christmas Spirit all aglow...

as we keep our faith in the child of long ago...

born in Bethlehem as the Bible tells us so.

We honor him in giving of ourselves to boys and girls...

bringing hope and joy to the whole wide world on Christmas morn.

The Milky Way is the path to the Northern Lights...

which shine so bright on a cold dark snowy night.

The North Pole is the land we love for all its magical dreams!

Hail to the North Pole, where Santa's Legend lives...

that represents St. Nick's love and childhood fantasies!

Hail to North Pole, North Pole, our land of Christmas dreams!

-Phillip L. Wenz

