

NEW HOLLAND

Area Historical Society



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The recent history of Kauffman's Hardware Santa Claus

Submitted by Lowell Parkes, A.k.a. Santa

Although the recorded history of “Kauffman’s Santa Claus” dates back to 1948, the history of its most recent Santa Claus began in early December 1981, and has continued for the past 42 consecutive years. It all started the day Lowell Parkes returned the iconic Santa Claus suit owned by Kauffman’s Hardware Store in New Holland, which he had worn the night before at the Kinder-Haus Day Care Center’s annual Christmas program. Upon returning the suit to the store that year, he was greeted by Clyde Kauffman, co-owner of the store, who asked him who had worn the suit for the Kinder-Haus Christmas program. Lowell responded by saying “I did,” which led to Clyde asking him if he would be willing to wear it for them at the store that year, on Christmas Eve. Although he only had a few hours’ experience “playing” old Saint Nick after being urged to do so by his wife, Lucy, who was serving as the kindergarten teacher at Kinder-Haus at that time, Lowell responded by saying, “I guess so.” Clyde was thrilled to hear that and, after informing his wife and co-owner, Evelyn, of that good news, he asked Santa Claus to “report for duty” at the store on Christmas Eve, from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm, to help greet customers and invite them to take a break from their last-minute shopping and help themselves to some punch and tasty snacks, as a means of the Kauffman’s thanking them for their business throughout the year. Since things went so well that year, as Santa Claus was leaving the store to return to the North Pole, Clyde asked him if he’d be willing to return to the store the following year, to greet their customers both young and old. However, not just on Christmas Eve the following year but, if possible, every Saturday between Thanksgiving and Christmas from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Although he was, and still is, VERY busy during that particular time of year, Santa agreed to do so, ultimately to help the Kauffman family fulfill their vision for and commitment to serving the residents of New Holland and its surrounding communities in eastern Lancaster Co. Santa continued returning to Kauffman’s Store every year thereafter until the store’s closing in December 2006, working closely with all members of the Kauffman family, including Clyde and Evelyn, Ken and Peg, Joe and Bev, Mike and Donna, and Connie Upton, as well as two of their long-serving and faithful employees, Rosie and Marianne, and many Christmas “elves,” to

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MISSION STATEMENT
The mission of the New Holland Area Historical Society is to collect, organize, and preserve information and historical materials that give insight to understanding the life and times of the New Holland area and to share these findings with others through Museum exhibits, lectures, and educational outreach programs.

greet the families and children who came to the store to visit Santa. All the children who visited Santa each year received a special gift from the Kauffman's, including a Christmas edition coloring book and candy cane, regardless of whether or not they had the courage to sit on Santa's lap. And, to be clear, not every child who "just can't WAIT to see Santa" is willing to sit on his lap when the time comes for them to do so. In those cases, a handshake or high-five or simple touch of the pointer finger will suffice, as Santa never wants to do anything to frighten or discourage a child from visiting and talking with him.

Christmas Eve December 2006 was the last time Santa visited Kauffman's Hardware Store due to the decision of the Kauffman family to close the doors on their family business at the end of the year. A sad time in the recent history of Kauffman's Santa Claus for sure and, more importantly, for the entire Kauffman family who had devoted their lives to owning and running their family business and serving the community. That day, as Santa was leaving the store for the very last time, Ken Kauffman informed him that their family decided to give him both the iconic Santa suit and one of the chairs in which Santa had sat over the many years he visited there. Although Santa was sorely disappointed to know he would not be visiting the store again, he considered it an honor to be given the suit, and he made a commitment to continue wearing it the following year and every year thereafter, as long as he was able to do so.

After purchasing a major portion of the Kauffman building in 2007, fellow local business owner, Steve Loewen, contacted Santa Claus and asked him if he'd be willing to continue wearing the iconic suit at his Radio Shack store that Christmas and each year after that until his vision to renovate the second floor of Kauffman's Store into a museum for the New Holland Area Historical Society became a reality. Santa responded by saying, "I guess so," and Steve's desire to continue the tradition of Kauffman's Santa Claus resurrected by Clyde Kauffman in 1981 was fulfilled. Santa visited the New Holland Radio Shack for Christmas for several years until the renovations of the Kauffman building were completed, at which point he returned to visiting there on an annual basis. However, only one time per year, on the morning of New Holland's "Christmas on Main" event, which is held on the first Saturday in December.

Over the past 42 years Kauffman's Santa Claus has had the privilege of greeting countless families and children from eastern Lancaster County and the surrounding area, and he has now held three generations of children from the same family on his lap, including this Christmas, Clyde and Evelyn's great-great grandchild. That same day, he had the privilege of greeting and interacting with a young man and his parents who presented Santa with a Christmas card containing a gracious thank-you note from their family and a picture of their two sons with Santa taken 18 years ago, when their son, who was with them that day, was only 6 years old.

Wow! Time sure does pass quickly, and the past 42 years have certainly "flown by" for Kauffman's Santa Claus. However, it "seems like only yesterday" that Clyde Kauffman asked Lowell Parkes if he'd be willing to wear the store's Santa suit on Christmas Eve that year, and when he responded by saying, "I guess so." Those three simple words, spoken in December 1981, has led to 42 consecutive years of Kauffman's Santa Claus seeing the "wonder of Christmas" in the eyes of countless children, the vast majority of whom truly "believe in Santa Claus" and have been "waiting all year" to see him again, to make their requests for Christmas gifts known with the hopes of catching a glimpse of him on Christmas Eve after leaving out their "cookies and milk for Santa, and an apple or some carrots for Rudolph and the other reindeer." What a privilege and joy it has been to be known as "Kauffman's Santa Claus" for more than four decades now, and be able to help fulfill Clyde Kauffman's and Steve Loewen's shared vision of serving the residents of New Holland and its surrounding communities in eastern Lancaster County, along with preserving this historic legacy.



Alyssa Leid, great-granddaughter of Clyde & Evelyn Kauffman and great-great-grandson Parker



This is the young man mentioned in the story



Photo on the left [Circa 1991] Is a picture of Clyde Kaufman, Lowell Parkes [Santa] along with his young daughter Katie who is now 32 years old. For perspective, the photo is taken at the cash register located in the current Lickity-Split ice cream restaurant looking east into Hicks clock shop



The photo shown above [circa 2010] is what Santa looks like in real life along with Steve Loewen, President of the New Holland Area Historical Society

Toys by Chein

Submitted by Lou Ann C. Miller

Did you ever own a Chein? For those of a certain age, metal toys such as a sand pail and shovel, a rollercoaster, Cracker Jack prizes, cars and trucks and even globes are part of fond childhood memories. With a nod to J. Chein and Co, pioneers in the toy trade, the Historical Society Museum has a treat for you.

Historical Society member, Mrs. Liz Bicking, has graciously lent us a collection of the Chein toys that she and her late husband, Larry Bicking, collected during their marriage. The history of the J. Chein Co. is a 19th century success story! Julius Chein was a one-armed Russian Jew who immigrated to America in 1893 at the age of 20. His physical disability didn't hamper him. In 1903, he was launching a metal stamping operation on West Broadway. His company produced small toys for five and dimes stores, primarily F. W. Woolworth store. Tiny painted tin prizes were produced as premiums in the boxes of a new confection called Cracker Jack.

In 1903, Chein filed for his first patent which he described as a "harmless device for the amusement of children." It was a runway track with a spiral loop, an open car and two small riders. With more patents, the company grew and Chein moved the business to Harrison, New Jersey. From 100 workers in 1912 the workforce grew to 300 workers in 1913. With the outbreak of WW I in Europe, production turned to some wartime toys- a projectile canon and an "Air-Gun" that shot cork bullets. In 1915, he patented a bank with a slot at the top for the coin which then registered the amount deposited, a wheel barrow, a push "Go-Cart", and a Toy Cash Register."

Chein died in 1926 at age 52, while riding his horse in Central Park. After his death, his wife Elizabeth became president. Elizabeth had been closely associated with directing the affairs of the company. She received patents for a toy tambourine, a push toy with jockeys on horseback, the first "Aeroplane" and the Hercules toy crane. The last line of toys developed by Julius Chein before his death was the Hercules series. It was heavy gauge tin trucks and cars. Each about a foot and a half in length, selling for a dollar each. When the company floundered around 1931, Elizabeth's brother, Samuel Hoffman, stepped in as Secretary-treasurer. Under his guidance, J. Chein and Co. rose to new heights of success and would produce remarkable toys. Easter rabbits and chickens, metal drums, tops, music boxes, a tin organ, noisemakers, tea sets, spring-wound walking clowns, duck and bears all were produced until 1942, when toy production stopped. J. Chein and Co. made munitions, nosecones and tails for bombs and the casings for incendiary devices.

With the end of the War, the company didn't immediately produce new products, but used the old ones. One new toy was a bank in the shape of a bazooka rocket nosecone recycling the company's war surplus.

Additional staff such as Hoffman's sons-in-law, Robert Beckelman and Irving Sachs, kept the company prosperous. The popular roller coaster was produced in 1949, followed by the Playland Merry-Go-Round in 1950, the Rocket Ride and the Playland Whip in 1953.

In the 1960's, the Chein plant was capable of producing 100,000 toys a day. A major blow befell the company in the 60's when the Consumer Product Safety Commission cited the hazards of sharp metal edges. Many of their toys had to be eliminated. The cost of retooling the edges was prohibitive.

The production of a styrene – a durable plastic- automatic player piano in 1963 was disastrous. The “Tweakie-Toys”, little plastic people who lived in their own community just didn't sell in 1969. A few years later, Fisher Price came out with a wood version looking like Tweakies and they sold. A toy series that was highly successful was the Peanuts gang, Charlie Brown and Snoopy toys. In the 1970's plastic became more the element of the old metal toymaker's product. With the acquisition of the Learning Aids Group, which was the parent company of Renwal, and its subdivision of the Perfect Parts Company, the world of plastic molding was added to the company.

J. Chein and Co. had also developed a housewares division, retooling its machinery from sand pails to wastebaskets. The toy division was discontinued in 1976. By then the company had become Chein Industries.

Written words can not express the creativity and beauty of a lithographed tin toy. You need to see them yourself. The items will be on display through Spring. Drop in to enjoy a huge array of the J. Chein and Co. toys.



Thank you to Liz Bicking for displaying four cases full of antique tin toys in the Museum

New Holland Area Historical Society 2022 Annual Report

That NHAHS is pleased to report that, thanks to the wonderful support of our community, 2022 was filled with many firsts and positive experiences. This article is not intended to be a definitive recounting of the year, and merely serves as an attempt to identify some highlights from 2022.

Our hope is that more individuals become involved in our efforts to emphasize the legacy of the New Holland area, so we encourage you, your family, and friends to take that step. You can do so by visiting the museum during our business hours, visiting our website at www.nhhistorical.com and submitting a contact form, or emailing us at NHAHS@nhhistorical.com.

The “Kauffman” Building

This is the first full year as the owner of our building, and it included many of the challenges associated with owning and managing rental properties. The turnover of tenants required maintenance and repairs for the rental spaces, and we welcome the following new businesses to our building:

- Safe Place Counseling - 203 E Main
- Jenny Lyn's Country Store - 205 E Main
- Lickity Split Business Office - 207A E Main

As an attempt to establish the “new” identity for the Kauffman Building we will refer to it going forward as the Museum on Main. A new sign is hung on the west side of the building using this name and the NHAHS logo. Looks sharp, so please check it out!

Preserving New Holland Capital Campaign

In early 2022, the NHAHS experienced the successful completion of the "Preserving New Holland" Capital Campaign. This effort began in late 2020 with a goal of generating the funding required to retire the mortgage on the Kauffman Hardware building as well as to do some much-needed renovation to the brickwork on the exterior of the building. The target amount for the campaign was \$250,000 and we are grateful to have collected over \$280,000. The initial phase of brickwork on the North wall was completed in the fall of the year, with the West wall scheduled for repairs in 2023. The success of this campaign enables the NHAHS to provide a permanent home for the Museum and the many events and services we provide. We extend our sincere appreciation and thanks to all who supported this campaign!

Public Programs

The October 2022 program, *The Coming of the Weavers to Weaverland Valley* was very well received and attendees included many first timers to our monthly program. We are always appreciative that Garden Spot Village allows us to hold our public meetings in their Chapel, a wonderful facility for these events. Beginning with the *Weavers* program, arrangements were made with GSV to record our programs, to post them on YouTube, and to provide us with a link to these videos to publish on our website allowing public viewing. It's a new and exciting way to use technology to share our mission with an expanding number of supporters, and once again, we greatly appreciate GSV's willingness to be a strong supporter of NHAHS' efforts!

The following programs are planned for 2023:

February 16TH *How I Came to Writing Novels about Amish Life*, Joann Brown, presenter

March 16TH *H. Clifton Thorbahn; Lancaster's Jazz Pioneer, Historian, Editor & Publisher*; Brett Snyder, presenter

April 20th *Abandoned America*; a hauntingly, beautiful urban exploration, chronicling the abandoned buildings in our midst including schools, churches, hospitals, power plants, etc.; Matthew Christopher, presenter

Newsletter

The NHAHS quarterly newsletter continued the tradition of publishing material that highlights the history of the New Holland area. In 2022 these articles included:

- The Dillers of Diller Avenue (or how Diller Avenue got its name)
- Early Tonsorial History in New Holland (the Victorian era barbers of New Holland)
- The Jonathan Weaver House and Hollander Motel
- Western School Alumni Reunion
- History of the United Brethren Church Buildings

Museum Information

We are pleased to report that the number of visitors to the Museum is back to pre-Covid levels. Of interest is an increase of visitors from outside our immediate area due to our upgraded website, social media presence, articles in various area publications, and our initial participation in the Lancaster County ExtraGive campaign.

2022 Exhibits

- 1895 – a new era begins
- Artwork by Myrtle Tremblay
- One Room School
- NH Machine Company
- Vintage tin toys
- 90th Farm Show Celebration featuring special Museum hours and historical Farm Show photo display
- Re-staging of Santa arrival to the Kauffman Building by New Holland firetruck
- The 42nd visit of Santa to the Museum on Main (aka, Kauffman Building)

The NHAHS participated in the 2nd Lancaster County Historical Societies meeting that included a total of 15 historical organizations. The group serves as an opportunity to share the experiences, ideas, and concerns of our peers focused on preserving the history of our county. The group will continue to meet on a semi-annual basis in 2023.

Carol Buncie volunteered to serve as Head Docent for the Museum. Carol has lived and worked in the New Holland area since 1974. She was a teacher at the Hinkletown and Union Grove Alternative Schools, followed by serving on the faculty at Garden Spot High School in the Family & Consumer Sciences department for a total of 36 years.

We appreciate the interest and support of so many residents and former residents of the New Holland area and look forward to our shared effort to honor and communicate the unique heritage of our community. Thanks!

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Area Historical Society



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www.NhHistorical.com

2023 Dues Reminder!

It's time to submit your dues payment for 2023, you can use the form below to attach with your check to indicate your membership level. If you missed a payment for your 2022 dues you can include that amount in the same check.

If you are unsure regarding the payment of your dues please send an email NHAHS@nhhistorical.com and we will get back to you with that information

The New Holland Area Historical Society welcomes R. Douglas and Linda Good as our first *Heritage Partner* in 2023. Doug is celebrating his 40th anniversary as attorney with the last 38 years practicing in New Holland. If you would like to support the Historical Society in this or manner or as a Business Partner, or personal member, please see the application below.

NEW HOLLAND AREA HISTORICAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Type of membership requested (please check one)

_____ Lifetime Membership (\$500) _____ Business Partner (\$500)

_____ Annual Personal/Household Membership (\$20)

_____ Heritage Partner Membership (\$1000) \$_____ Other/Additional Gift

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Zip Code: _____ Phone: () _____ E-mail: _____

Please make check payable to NHAHS and mail with this application to:
New Holland Area Historical Society PO Box 464 New Holland PA 17557