

Winter 2024

Historical Journal



LITITZ HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

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Christmas as it was - Lititz 1950s

Charlene Van Brookhoven

Technology has definitely influenced how young people have changed their Christmas wish lists. In Lititz during the 1950's Santa Claus would sit atop fire engine #1 and ride through the streets of town on his way to the fire station. Here he would greet the children with a small box of Wilbur Buds and an orange. A special movie such as Lady and the Tramp would be playing at The Lititz Theater where young people would be lined up to pay twenty-five cents for admission and another ten cents for a locally-made peanut butter paddle or spearmint stick. After two hours of entertainment, the kids would rush home and scan the J.C. Penney or Sears and Roebuck catalogs in search of the newest and most popular toys of the season.



There were a number of retail stores in Lititz to make choosing favorite toys a special occasion. It may be a Tiny Tears doll for little girls or a set of Lincoln Logs for little boys. Zartman's Store at the corner of North Broad and Front Streets was an exciting shop to explore in search of the perfect popular toys. "Zarties," the local familiar name, was the one stop shop to find "everything Christmas." Glass tree ornaments, tinsel, angels, colored lights (including bubble lights), and cans of white tree flocking were on the overflowing shelves. The second floor of the building is where the magic of Christmas appeared for the young ones. Dolls and doll accessories including clothes, strollers, high chairs, baby bottles and entire small kitchen sets could be specially noted on Santa's Christmas list. Metal and plastic cars, trucks, train sets and farm equipment toys were stocked for the approval of young boys. Matchbox toys were the first choice because of the unlimited designs and models of vehicles which could be traded between friends.

Above: View of the toy section inside Zartman's store from decades ago. Story continued inside on page four.

*Winter 2024**HISTORICAL JOURNAL***Thank you for GIVING EXTRA on November 22nd!**

Wow, what a day! Thanks so much to the 57 donors who donated a total of \$8,145 to us on November 22nd via the Extraordinary Give!

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**2025 Membership Drive**

Our 2025 Membership Drive is here! Please check this issue for an insert about your renewal inside this issue. We appreciate your support!

Visit our gift shop this holiday season!

Holiday shopping is now in full gear. Why not shop local and support the Lititz Historical Foundation at the same time? Our large gift shop has a GREAT selection of Moravian stars, our own label of scented candles, local history books, stocking stuffers, Christmas items, home décor, and so much more! We are open Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 11am to 5pm.

Annual Christmas Carol Sing is December 12th!

Join the Lititz Historical Foundation in conjunction with the Lititz Moravian Archives for their annual Community Christmas Carol Sing Thursday, December 12th at 6:30 PM.

This is a FREE event but donations are always appreciated!

The event will take place at Moravian Church Square. The Moravian Trombone Choir will be on hand and free song sheets will be handed out as you, your friends, neighbors, and family will sing holiday classics. Afterwards, all are welcome to warm up inside Fellowship Hall where light refreshments will be served. The Putz will also be available for various showings throughout the evening in the church's social hall. See you there!



Outsider Visitation to Bethlehem and Other Moravian Towns lecture slated for Jan. 11

Join us on Saturday, January 11th at 1:30pm at the Lititz Public Library for our next lecture! We'll be joined by Christopher Malone, who will discuss "An Establishment of Order and Prosperity: Outsider Visitation to Bethlehem and Other Moravian Towns." Registration begins at 9am on December 28th at 9am. Beginning on that date and time, please call the Lititz Library at 717-626-2255 to register. This program is free and open to the public. We hope to see you there!



Above: Bethlehem, PA in 1784

Christmas as it was - Lititz 1950s con't:

Harris Variety Center at 23 East Main Street was another popular store in town filled with Christmas goodies. As the name implied, throughout the year a large variety of goods could be found; but as the Christmas season approached, the store took on the look of Santa's workshop filled with all the newest toys. Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head with their many changing faces, Play-Doh in colors of red, green, blue and yellow, plastic eggs filled with Silly Putty, and Slinky toys that could "crawl" down steps with a little shove were requested from Santa.

Gearharts 5&10 at 15 South Broad Street had a section of small Christmas gifts for the young people on Santa's list. Hula Hoops in several bright colors, packs of playing cards including Go Fish, Old Maid, War and Slap Jack were always at the ready on rainy or cold days to pass the time. Board games such as Uncle Wiggley, Chutes and Ladders, and Candy Land were wonderful learning games for younger kids. Paint by number kits were a popular choice for "Secret Santa" to hand out in Sunday School or at scout Christmas parties. Mr. and Mrs. Gearhart were always available to help choose the right toy for the right aged child.

Later on Christmas morning new, bright shiny bicycles were filling Lititz streets with young riders testing how fast their new wheels could go. Hen and Dave's Bicycle and Glass Shop at 301 East Main Street was the place to buy Schwinn or Roadmaster bikes and all the accessories one needed to have the best bike on the block.

The 1950's streets in Lititz had more bicycle traffic than cars. It was important to have a bike horn, handlebar streamers, and of course a cardboard baseball card attached to the wheel spokes with a clothes pin to make the cool sound of a loud motorcycle.



Popular books were included in many wish lists for Santa. Workman's Lititz Book Store at 14 East Main Street, now the home of The Bull's Head Pub, was the first stop in Lititz for young peoples' books, coloring books, pencils, pens and writing tablets. Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys series books were found on the bookshelves of every young reader in the 1950's. Solving the mysteries of these youthful detectives was a way for boys and girls to follow clues in the pages of each book and discover who committed the crime.

Above: Harris's Variety Store during the 1960s. Story concluded on the next page.

Christmas as it was - Lititz 1950s con't:

Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* was the most widely read children's book during the 1950's holiday season. *The Cat in the Hat* also by Seuss became a successful book because its rhyming words taught children how to read. Every grandparent was responsible for buying the book as the "perfect Christmas present from Grandma."

There were other small shops in Lititz during the 1950's where Christmas gifts could be purchased. 45 r.p.m, records were becoming popular with the teen scene with Elvis Presley leading the way with "Heartbreak Hotel." Reedy's Appliance store at 69 East Main Street was the first store in town to carry 45 r.p.m. record players and a large choice of popular 1950's recordings.



Above: A 1950s record player

A walk back into the Christmas season in Lititz during the 1950's was a simple time where battery powered toys were found under the tree. The toy stores have been replaced by web sites, big box stores and technology. Fortunately, Lititz has kept its charm and still boasts a number of small privately-owned retail stores although Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head would be hard to find.

Book a wedding in our Mary Oehme Gardens!

Now is the time to book our gorgeous Mary Oehme Gardens This versatile space is perfect for weddings, showers, family reunions, and special events.

For a very affordable price, you receive the entire space including the carriage house containing a changing room, restrooms, and a common area.

Contact us today at 717-627-4636 or info@lititzhistoricalfoundation.com with any questions or to reserve the space. Photo by Alyssa Bunton Photography.



DID YOU KNOW...?



On October 21, 1986, students of John Beck Elementary participated in a balloon lift off as part of First Lady Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign.

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