

PRESSRELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Christmas At Barker Mansion

Michigan City, IN (November 13, 2003) - This year Michigan City's "Christmas at Barker Mansion" features decorations, holiday gift-giving customs, and the traditional gift-bringing figure from countries around the world.

Cecilia Zubler, Director of the Barker Mansion, said, "Midwinter gift giving is traced back to the ancient Romans and has gone through many transformations over the centuries. Whether symbolizing good wishes, extending charity, demonstrating affection, or a spiritual significance, gift giving continues to be a central element of modern-day holiday celebrations."

In America, gift-giving traditions became widespread during the 19th century with the adoption of the Christmas tree and the figure of Santa Claus. "In most countries," Zubler said, "gift-giving traditions include a mythological or spiritual figure leaving presents on a celebration day such as Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, St. Nicholas Day, New Year's Day, Three Kings Day, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or English Boxing Day."

Fourteen countries and their customs will be presented in various rooms throughout the Mansion during the 2003 Christmas At Barker Mansion experience. Father Christmas, representing the Barker English heritage, greets visitors in the library, and an angelic Christkindel of Austria emerges from a glistening forest of pine trees. The brightly colored French Pere Noel contrasts with Italy's LaBefana on the first floor. Other gift givers represented are Sweden's Jultomten, Russia's Father Frost, Poland's Star Man, Holland's St. Nicholas accompanied by Black Peter, Three Kings of Spain, and Santa Claus unpacking his bag in front of an American-style fireplace. Colonial Williamsburg and holiday customs of Japan, Israel and Nigeria are also featured.

The decorations may be viewed with a self-guided tour during the annual Open House from December 6th through December 21st. Hours for the Open House are Monday through Friday at Noon and 3pm and on Saturdays and Sundays at Noon and 4pm.

From December 22nd through January 15th, the decorations may be seen only with a guided tour Monday through Friday at 10:00 am, 11:30 am, and 1:00 pm. Saturday and Sunday guided tours are at Noon and 2 pm.

On Saturday, December 13th only, extended hours are from Noon to 6:00 pm. Free horse-drawn wagon rides through festively lit Michigan City, sponsored by the Main Street Association, begin at 6 pm. These rides may be boarded in front of the Mansion.

Christmas family tours are scheduled for Sunday, December 14th and Sunday, December 21st at 5:00 pm. Phone reservations are required for this tour.

The Mansion will be closed December 24, 25 and January 1. Admission cost is \$4.00 for adults and \$2.00 for youth 18 and under. Call 219/873-1520 for more information or group tour reservations.

Barker Mansion is a thirty-eight room 1905 House Museum on the National Register of Historic Places and contains many original furnishings and art objects. John H. Barker, freight car industrialist, built the manufacturing plant that was located on the site of Lighthouse Place Premium Outlet center. The Mansion is only one block east of the mall at 631 Washington Street, Michigan City, Indiana.

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