

12-23-80

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



"REMARKABLE MAN"

On May Day 1966, Charles W. Howard, founder and creator of the world-renowned Santa Claus School and Christmas Park, which was located just west of Albion suffered a fatal heart attack. Two days later the Journal-Register printed an editorial in his honor which is re-printed in part here.

"If there ever was an opportunity of contemplating the values of living, it could be done in evaluating the life of Charlie Howard. Looking at it from a purely material point of view, here was a man who never caught up to the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. He spent his entire lifetime of commercial pursuits in projects that never made many dollars and most of them ended in financial failure.

"Yet, in his lifetime he brought more joy and fulfillment to thousands of boys and girls than any living man. He had the ability of imparting to them complete confidence in the intangible something called Santa Claus when all the rest of the world about them was seemingly falling apart and men tearing at each others throats.

"There must have been times when Charlie Howard was saddened and discouraged."

"But we have seen him a hundred times or more and we have never seen his face wreathed in anything but a smile.

"He bounced from one failure to a new project with an enthusiasm and courage that could only be born in a being with vision and love of living. Regretfully, perhaps, this could not have been translated into greater financial rewards.

"But he has left something behind that could not be purchased with all the gold in Fort Knox. His countenance may have been hidden with the false appurtenances that attend the personification of Saint Nick: the boys and girls who sat on his knee or stood by his side and poured their young hearts out to him in frank confession, might have little knowledge of the physical attributes of the man; but beneath it all was the face of a man who was getting far more than he was receiving in spiritual wealth.

"Christmas times may come and go but there will be something about a Macy parade that will not just be the same."

"There will be thousands of other Santas bending an ear to thousands of other kids but in the books of many there was one supreme."

Charlie used to say "They err who think Santa Claus enters through the chimney. He enters through the heart." Shown in the accompanying photo taken around thirty years ago, is Santa Claus Charles Howard being presented with a key to Albion from the late Mayor William A. Monacelli as Leslie Canham looks on.