



A feature publication of **The Courier & REVIEW TIMES**  
The Advertiser-Tribune

# Discover

## December 2024



### Finding the holiday spirit at Ghost Town

Attraction open for the Christmas season  
By: Jeannie Wiley Wolf  
Photos provided



Ghost Town, a replica of an 1880s western town located south of Findlay will once again be transformed into an old-fashioned winter village for the holidays.

FINDLAY — Tis' the season for an old-fashioned Christmas.  
And where better to enjoy a holiday from the past than at a place with a past like Ghost Town?

For the second year, the replica 1880s-era western frontier town south of Findlay will be transformed into a celebration of lights, decorations and visits from live characters like Santa Claus and The Grinch.

Ghost Town Christmas Lights & More! began the weekend of Nov. 22 and 23 and continues every Friday and Saturday through Dec. 21. Hours are 5-8 p.m.

Admission is by donation, said Cheryl Larbus, who with her husband, John, owns Ghost Town.

"We're making it very affordable for everyone to attend. We want our community to be able to experience the magic of Christmas and create memories to last a lifetime," she said.

Most of the buildings are decorated with Christmas trees, snowmen, garland, wreaths and colorful lights. Even the horns of the taxidermy deer heads are trimmed with ornaments and

bells.

Sheriff Elfie and The Grinch will be on hand to meet visitors, and individuals and families can have their picture taken in the photo studio. This is the only activity that has a price — \$5.

The history of Ghost Town dates back to the late 1950s when Ed Galitza bought an old log cabin in Marseilles for \$50. His father, Louis, helped reconstruct the building on an acre off County Road 40. This was the beginning of what would become Ghost Town Museum Park.

By 1994 when he was interviewed for an article in The Courier, Galitza said the family was "still putting the west in the Midwest." One cabin on an acre of land grew to include 28 buildings scattered over 13 acres. Mannequins presided over some of the displays. Old miners' songs played over the park's sound system, and a few body-distorting carnival mirrors and stocks were set around for fun.

Many of the buildings at Ghost Town are old.

Continued on page 3

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Nail Trim



A cabin that was originally from the Vanlue area belonged to Major Bright, one of Hancock County's early settlers. His family included 10 children. A jail cell, circa 1850, came from Bairdstown.

Once a building was in place, Galitza would fill it with antiques and memorabilia. During the 1980s, the country store held thousands of pieces of old-time merchandise.

In its heyday, the attraction drew as many as 30,000 visitors a season. Unfortunately, the town fell into disrepair over the years, closing to the public in 2008.

Galitza later sold the property to the Larbuses, who provided the resources needed to restore the attraction. A Ghost Town packed with thrills and chills returned in fall 2015 for Halloween. A craft show followed the next year.

The town was also used as the location for a full feature film called "The Curse of Bryerstone" in 2020.

The goal since the Larbuses purchased the property has been to leave its scary reputation behind, opting instead for more family-friendly events. They recently became a non-profit, now known as Ghost Town Ministries.

The spark for a Christmas event can be traced back to Sarah Nofziger, the former event coordinator. One year she put out a request saying they would take donations of Christmas decorations.

"But then she left the position and we had a whole bunch of Christmas in attics, in areas out here, the Boy Scout Camp Berry had a trailer filled," Larbus recalled.

Last year the couple and others used some of the donations to decorate nearby Pleasant Grove Church for Christmas and held an open house.

But people wanted more Christmas, said Larbus.

"We had horrible weather last year for the corn maze. Well, all of our people who were here because we didn't have many customers, they had an absolute ball decorating (for Christmas)," she said.

And surprisingly, she said, many of the volunteers wanted to do it again this year.

"There was cookie decorating," said Larbus. "We had several churches that did that. They just had a ball.

One church did crafts along with the cookies. "We're encouraging churches. I've had several that are interested. My own church did caroling (last year). It was beautiful," she said.

The Clauses can be found talking to youngsters in the Quick Draw Saloon. Larbus said they had coloring pages there last year to keep everyone occupied while they waited.

"One day last year Santa was ill and couldn't come so the kids made get well cards for him," she said.

A metal cell outside the jail features a sign that reads "Santa, I was Framed." Larbus said it's a popular spot for photos for visitors.

A decorated trolley car offers hot chocolate to warm cold fingers and toes.

Larbus said the primitive church is her favorite building in the town.

"We had a gentleman stand out and let people know they could write their prayer requests," she said.

Those papers, which were pinned to the wall last year, will be hung up again this year.

"And there were people that said this was their favorite, too, because it was magical when you came in here. It was beautiful. It was simple, but it was beautiful," Larbus said.

People can walk through the buildings and then vote for their favorite one. Families can also participate in an "I Spy" game for each of the rooms.



"Our goal is not to make money. Our goal is to give families a wonderful opportunity that's affordable," she said. "Even in our general store, we have dollar things, we have 50 cents for some candy. We're not looking like Cedar Point to get the high dollar," she said.

The volunteers take time each night to pray before the gates open.

"You know, our job is for them to feel like they've been to someplace different," said Larbus. "We don't hit them over the head with the Bible. We just love every single person who comes in."

Ghost Town is located at 10630 County Road 40, 2½ miles south of Findlay.



Many trees will fill Ghost Town for the holidays. These three trees have been decorated with sheet music and hymn books.



Volunteers provided help to decorate the buildings and other structures, including old railroad cars.





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**NOV 22 - DEC 31**

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**DECEMBER 1**

## **MAUMEE HOLIDAY LIGHT PARADE AND HOLIDAY HUSTLE 5k**

**6 pm**

**WHERE: Uptown Maumee**

Attend this beautiful holiday tradition in uptown Maumee. Runners and walkers dress in holiday garb to either run a 5K race or enjoy a 1.5-mile fun walk. Proceeds from the event benefit the Maumee Senior Center. After the race, get in the holiday spirit and watch the lighted floats and more during the holiday light parade.



**DECEMBER 1**

## **HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS IN MCCOMB**

**4 - 7 pm**

**WHERE: Main Street in McComb**

Celebrate Christmas with the McComb community! Enjoy the McComb tree lighting, Christmas market, activities for kids, visit with Santa at the library, live music and more. Park at McComb Local Schools and take advantage of the free shuttle, courtesy of McComb Methodist Church.



**DEC 6, 13, 20**

## **WINTERFEST**

**5 - 8 pm**

**WHERE: Downtown Findlay**

Bring the family for FREE holiday fun in downtown Findlay. Enjoy the holiday market in Dorney Plaza, and stroll through the many downtown shops that will be open late for holiday shopping. Indulge in a great meal or a DORA beverage at local establishments. Stop by Santa's House for a visit.

More info at [VisitFindlay.com/Winterfest](http://VisitFindlay.com/Winterfest)





**DECEMBER 7**

## TIFFIN KIWANIS CHRISTMAS PARADE

**7:30- 8:30 pm**

**WHERE: Downtown Tiffin**

The annual parade welcomes all to join and delight with Christmas spirit and goodness. Floats, local groups and Santa himself will appear in the annual downtown Christmas event.



**DECEMBER 7 & 8**

## COATS FOR CHRISTMAS

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**December 7: 9 am - 3 pm and December 8: 1 pm - 3pm**



**DECEMBER 8**

## SENSORY SANTA WORKSHOP

**1 - 4 pm**

**WHERE: NCOESC Tiffin Campus 928 W. Market St., Tiffin**

Enjoy snacks, crafts, games, sensory tables, a quiet room, a magician, characters, a photo booth, music, and, of course, Santa Claus!

**RSVP by December 3 via email at [sensorysanta@ncoesc.net](mailto:sensorysanta@ncoesc.net).**



**DECEMBER 31**

## NOON YEAR'S EVE PARTY

**11:30 am-12:30 pm**

**WHERE: Findlay Hancock County Public Library 206 Broadway, Findlay**

Join your friends at the library for a New Year's Eve celebration perfect for the whole family! Wear your fanciest party gear and join us at the library for a story and craft as we count down to noon under the library's skylight. During the event under the skylight, the Lindamood Room will be set up as a quiet space for adults.



**This information was pulled from community websites and was considered current at press time.**

**We apologize for any information that may have been changed/updated after this edition was printed.**

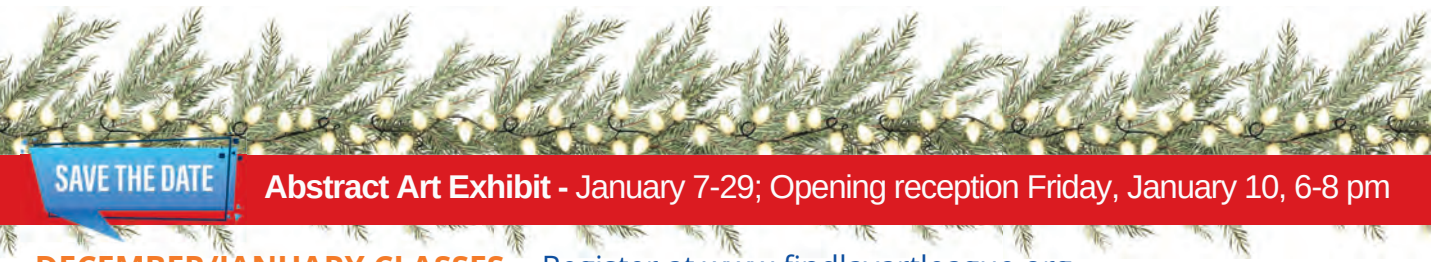




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**Parent & Child “Play-in-Clay” Wheel Throwing**-Saturday, 9-11 am, December 7; Tuition: \$100 (for two), all materials provided, all skill levels welcome. Instructor: Cindy Meadows

**Young Adult Pottery, Ages 7-17**-Saturdays, 9-10:30 Wheel & 10:30-noon Glazing, December 14, 21, 28; Tuition: \$150, all materials provided, all skill levels welcome. Instructor: Cindy Meadows

**Parent & Child “Play-in-Clay” Wheel Throwing**-Saturday, 9-11 am, January 4; Tuition: \$100 (for two), all materials provided, all skill levels welcome. Instructor: Cindy Meadows

**Beginning Pottery Wheel Throwing**-Wednesdays, 7:00-9:00 pm, January 8, 15, 22, 29, February 5, 12; Tuition: \$190, all materials provided, all skill levels welcome (18+). Instructor: Marcie Allen

**Intermediate Pottery Wheel Throwing**-Thursdays, 7:00-9:00 pm, January 9, 16, 23, 30, February 6, 13; Tuition: \$200, all materials provided, beginning skill level required (18+). Instructor: Marcie Allen

**Young Adult Pottery, Ages 7-17**-Saturdays, 9-10:30 Wheel & 10:30-noon Glazing, January 11, 18, 25; Tuition: \$150, all materials provided, all skill levels welcome. Instructor: Cindy Meadows

## POTTERY PARTIES

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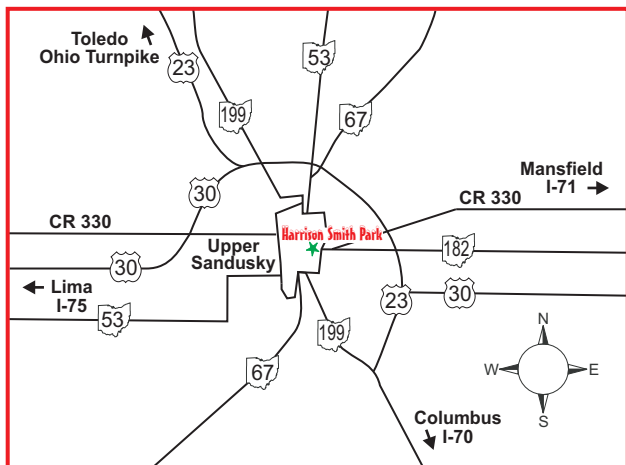
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# Local Santa!



*Santa Claus  
(a.k.a., Mike Kimmet)  
delivers gifts for good girls and boys.*

## 'Kimmet Claus brings hope, joy Tiffin man has played Santa for 40 years

By: Karen Kin Photos Provided

TIFFIN — "Kimmet Claus" has been bringing the Christmas spirit to Tiffin for 40 years.

Tiffin resident Mike Kimmet said this is the 40th year he has played Santa for families and venues in the area, and plans to

continue his visits "until it's no longer fun."

Kimmet said his role as Santa began "many, many years ago," when he was tasked with Santa appearances for family members.

By word of mouth, he said, knowledge of his visits grew, and he added stops at businesses and organizations to his schedule.

Over the years, he has been Santa at Westgate Mall (alongside real reindeer), Jeffrey Jewelry, the School of Hope, Mohawk School, and Knights of Columbus, he said, and he's ridden in parades as communities welcomed Santa for the Christmas season.

For the past nine years, he has been seated as Santa for Operation Elf at the Tiffin-Seneca Public Library, he said.

That event, in participation with National Machinery, offers Santa visits with pictures, during which children receive the gift of a book to take home.

Kimmet said he was asked one year to play Santa for pets at Rural King, and this past

summer he made a Christmas in July appearance at the Tiffin Drive-In Theater.

Santa wore shorts, sunglasses and a summer shirt to the event, he said.

For personal Santa visits, Kimmet said he tries to cater to the needs of each family, from being "caught" putting gifts under the tree to visiting families for many years in a row.

Some families, he said, call him in January to book him for the next Christmas.

In addition, he said, for kids who have seen him multiple times, his special Santa bag gives him away as "the real Santa."

The visits, he said, bring "a lot of hugs, a lot of joy."

"Santa is real," Kimmet said. "Santa is the spirit of Christmas."

Reflecting on Christmases past and those to come, he said, the best gift is always "who is around the tree."



*Santa even hears the  
Christmas wishes of local pets.*





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 [bvhealthsystem.org/births](https://bvhealthsystem.org/births)

# Ghost Town

## Christmas Lights & More!



**Everyone is welcome!**

Admission is by donation only, so every family will have the opportunity to enjoy!

## Fridays & Saturdays 5-8pm

November 22, 23, 29 & 30; December 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21

Each year, Ghost Town transforms into a magical Christmas wonderland! Stroll through the town to take in the sights and sounds of Christmas. Santa & Mrs. Claus will be on hand to meet with children of all ages. It's a festive holiday outing for the entire family!



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10630 CR 40, Findlay | 419-673-7783 | [ghosttownfindlay.com](http://ghosttownfindlay.com)

