

Collections #2

Let's talk about some more Christmas village collections. But first, I left out a couple of important collections from the Department 56 (D56) domain in the last column.

How about **the** original collection – when in 1976 Department 56 introduced a series of six hand-painted, ceramic buildings?



Another D56 series I forgot was the Winters Frost collection. Upon further research I found what is probably the definitive website that lists the huge number of D56 collections – The Village Chronicler. Here is the link to the many D56 collections:

<https://thevillagechronicler.com/TheCollections.shtml>

Be sure to check out all the other topnotch and timely columns on TheVillageCollector.com – the always interesting "Just So You Know (JSYK)" by David Spears, Thea Heyink's "The Creation Station," "Phil & Sue's Village" (from England!), "From Italy:

Villaging in Europe" by Peppe Apuleo (fascinating!), "*A Dickens Christmas*" and "*Hauntsville*" by Larry Treadwell, Tips & Trix by Mark Frendo, and soon to be more by webmaster Bill Channell. **Please keep visiting the Village Videos page and watch, watch, watch.** There will be a new batch of village videos starting on the 1st of each month! So many ideas, so little time... and not enough money.

Right behind D56 in popularity in the U.S. is Lemax, and Lemax is probably the leader in worldwide sales.

Lemax was founded in 1990 by Jack Lee. From a modest selection of quaint lighted houses, their collection has expanded to encompass a world of houses, figurines, and accessories. The Lemax head office is located in Hong Kong and the Lemax factories are located in Quangdong Province in southeastern China. Lemax claims to have more than 5,000 employees delivering more than a million lighted houses and ten million figurines every year.

Like D56, Lemax has standard large collections that have endured over the years. I would guess that Caddington Village is the largest and most popular. Collectors can choose from a wide arrangement of inviting cottages, cathedrals, carriages and sleighs, village accessories, and opera houses that add elegant, urban Victorian Era charm to this holiday village.



Another large collection of buildings and figures that continues to today is the nautically themed Plymouth Corners. Seaside adventures abound at Plymouth Corners — a charming New England village complete with working docks, rustic lighthouses, and quirky bed and breakfasts.



If you're a fan of mountains and skiing and outdoor activities, then Vail Village is the choice for you. Many European village displays feature extensive and exquisite mountain landscaping. The Lemax Vail Village Collection features rustic sawmills, bed and breakfasts, plenteous wildlife, and hikers from all over. Rough logs and lumber, stacked stone, and snow-capped roofs add to the enchanting, outdoor feel that makes this holiday village so charming and desirable.



Harvest Crossing is Lemax's heartland community representing the heart and soul of the American hometown. Rich in community and resources, the Harvest Crossings Village Collection features a warm architectural style that welcomes old friends and newcomers alike. With buildings ranging from farmhouses to wonderful barns, wishing wells, and stone mills, this collection brings back the good old days.



Jukebox Junction is one of Lemax's most nostalgic villages, bringing back memories of cruising down Main Street in the 1950's. Home to sock hops, burger joints, milkshakes, and classic cars, Jukebox Junction delights Lemax collectors with its retro, hometown feel. Full of fun and color, the town invites collectors to remember this era of optimism, rock and roll, and community.



Wonderful and imaginative, Santa's Wonderland Village Collection invites Lemax collectors to rediscover the magic of the Christmas season. Take a trip to the North Pole with a visit to Santa's Wonderland. This whimsical and imaginative Christmas village gives you a sneak-peak at life with Santa and his elves. See where Santa's elves collect letters to Santa, build toys for Christmas, and groom the reindeer in advance of their big adventure on Christmas Eve.



With fun at the center, Carnival Village is a place of excitement for people of all ages. The bright big tops, tricky carnival games, and non-stop thrill rides invite collectors to be kids again. The Lemax Carnival Collection recreates the sights and sounds that have enchanted generations of carnival goers. From the games of the midway to the imaginative animation motion of the rides, the Carnival is sure to capture the imagination of friends and family.

In a village video, motion or animation is always a draw for the viewer. It brings the village display alive. Lemax Carnival pieces are full of motion.



The craftsmanship that goes into every Lemax Facade makes them a perfect centerpiece of a collection, or to stand alone as their own decoration. Each of the Lemax Facades has a unique story to tell. The vibrant details will immediately catch your eye.

I saw a fellow on Facebook who said he had 91 Lemax facades! I own 12 facades and when we were on the 2019 Gathering house tour, I mounted them on the wall leading up to our 3rd floor large village display. They are powered by 4.5 volts, so you can use an adapter or choose to place three AA batteries in them.



Just a scone's throw from the North Pole, Sugar N Spice is the sweetest holiday village you'll ever find! You can bring your sweet tooth to the Sugar N' Spice village collection, one of the newest Lemax collections. This lovable village of gingerbread men and women are ready to transport you to a world of candy canes, gumdrops, chocolate, and more icing than you could ever ask for.



Amidst dismal decay and dilapidated buildings, the living dead have found a place to rest in pieces in Spooky Town. Welcome to Spooky Town, the world's most frightfully fun Halloween Village. Lemax has gathered a "spooktacular" collection of finely crafted lighted buildings, animated accessories, detailed landscaping, and ghoulish figurines to help you celebrate this popular holiday.



If you peruse eBay's *Collectibles>Holiday & Seasonal>Villages & Houses* during August through October, you will be amazed at the wide variety of Spooky Town buildings, accessories, and figures. There is a whole subcollection of creepy ships and pirate sailing vessels.

A very popular series associated with Carnival Village was the Lemax Zoo series, issued from mostly 2008 through 2016, although their Penguin House was available until 2020. These pieces included City Zoo Entrance (#83702), City Zoo Visitors (#84854, animated with sound), Zoo Kiosk (#03805), Polar Bear Cage (#84847, animated), Giraffe Cage (#84848, animated), Penguin House (#84823), Reptile House (#84849), Mom and Baby Elephants (#93752), Zebra Family (#93759), Lion Cage (#93758), Panda Cage (#93770), Monkey Habitat (#04229, animated), Zoo Kiosk (#03805), Tiger Family (03846), and Gorilla Habitat (#03803).



The Lemax Summer Americana series is recent and was sold exclusively through Michaels stores. Some years they were available and sometimes not available.

A very early series in the 1990s was Lemax Hearthside Village and Dickensvale. Many but not all of these are listed on the official website www.lemaxcollection.com.

Do you like food trucks? Lemax has a whole series of these, some with accompanying figures. A non-exhaustive list includes Taco Food Truck (#43086), Speedy's Slider Truck (#43082), Ice Cream Truck (#33029), Johnnie's Hot Chocolate (#93442), Goody Wagon (#43100), Meg's Cupcake Express (#53242), Peppermint Patty Wagon (#83364), Joe's Smoke Shack (#93443), Greek Food Truck (#73316), The Gingerbread Man (#63278), Cheese Please (#83373), and Funnel Cakes Food Truck (#93420). D56 has Hollie's Lunch Truck (#4042396), The Black Forest Brats Mobile (#4044874), Perch Palace Fish Shack (#6011418), La Fiesta To Go Truck (#4042411), and a host of grisly offerings in the Halloween series.

There are other vendor trucks available from Lemax, not associated with food sales. These include Kringle's Christmas Tree Lot (#53239), Washin' Wagon (#33010), Craftsman Tool Truck (#83374), and Wally's Pet Wash Wagon (#63279).

If you like larger buildings with animation, you might enjoy Lemax's Christmas food manufacturing building series. Take a look at the Old Fashioned Chocolate Company (#95888), The Christmas Chocolatier Truffle Factory (#15805), Vintage Grind Coffee Company (#75187), Canterbury Farms Egg Nog Factory (#65131), Rising Star Bakery (#35557), Bell's Gourmet Popcorn Factory (#75188), Miss Millie's Muffin Mill (#35020), Christmas Cheer Bottling Company (#25858), Tea with Mrs. Claus (#35018), The Candy Cane Works (#05681), Lewis Candy Factory (#51760) and party at Santa's Rooftop Bash (#25861). I've always thought Spooky Town's Mystery Meat Canning Company (#35008) might look nice next to the D56 Spam Museum.



There are retired or noncurrent Lemax collections, too. Coventry Cove was the line sold through Sears and Kmart. The earlier Carole Towne line was sold through Lowe's stores. Lemax made buildings and accessories for a brand-named Enchanted Forest, sold through Dillard's and then Menards. Aside from Michaels exclusive pieces, Lemax made buildings for My Little Town in Rhode Island. These pieces and figures are rarer and are not listed on the official website www.lemaxcollection.com.

Lots of collectors pooh-pooh or dismiss off-brand collections. Although these two brands are sized significantly smaller than the typical o-scale Christmas village buildings, the David Winter Cottage Village and Lilliput Lane Village collections are beautifully made. Moreover, Lilliput Lane shared the same overlord corporation as D56 – Enesco, LLC.



Other off-brands I see a lot of from the 1990s and early 2000s are Coca Cola Town Square, George Lefton Colonial Village, and Trim A Home It's A Wonderful Life Bedford Falls Village.

In 1992, a company called Cavanaugh came out with a Coca Cola Christmas Village (Town Square), sold at Target. The original theme of Town Square was 1920s and 1930s. Each year, they came out with six new buildings. They stopped in 2006. They produced about 120 buildings and at least 200 people figurines. The



buildings were mainly businesses, with few houses. Collectors purchase other brands' Christmas houses for the residents living there.

George Zoltan Lefton was known as "The China King" for his work in porcelain imports. He was founder of the Geo. Zoltan Lefton Co. on the South Side of Chicago. The company, which employed more than 400 people across the globe, had 18 showrooms, one of them in the Merchandise Mart.



Target stores sold a porcelain holiday village "A Tribute to the Movie It's a Wonderful Life." The series is actually called "A Wonderful Holiday." Made in the Philippines and China during a six-year period, 1993 to 1998, a collection of 30 village buildings were introduced along with figurines that are part of the official collection.

1993 (6 original+): The Bijou Theatre, Grower Drugstore & Soda Fountain, Old Granville House, Bailey Bros Building & Loan, Train Station, and The Bedford Falls Chapel. Also, the Welcome Bedford Falls Sign.

1994 (3 new+): Bedford Falls Public Library, Bedford Falls Trust & Savings, and Boarding House. Also, the Bedford Falls Express Train Set and 3-piece Red Box Chapel Set.

1995: (5 new+): Martini's Bar, Bedford Falls Garage, Police Station, High School, and Bridge. Also, the Chapel 3 piece set and 3-piece Train Station Set,

1996: (10 new+): Mary Hatch House, Boston Luggage Store, Andersen Dept Store, Record Shop, Barber Shop, Hearth Bakery, Travel Agency, City Hall, Bedford Falls Church, and Bert the Policeman House.

1997: No new releases

1998: (6 new+) Potter's Mill, Post Office, Potter's Mansion, Knickerbocker Inn, Sentinel News, and Uncle Billy's House. Also, the Martini Family Move.

You can view this "It's A Wonderful Life" collection in the inventive 2017 YouTube video created by Tony Rigby:

It's A Wonderful Life Bedford Falls Christmas Village (7:04)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjnMXa2W0HI>.



Also, from the early 2000s there was a brand named the Saturday Evening Post Norman Rockwell Village. Each building

had a 3D interior scene, which is now much more common and popular.

The folks who run the Bradford Exchange soon introduced the Hawthorne Village® lines of collectible villages that resemble the D56 Heritage Village Collection series in several ways. Though the earliest villages were ceramic or porcelain, later villages depended more on resin. Resin structures use painted-on finishes instead of baked-in glazes like most D56 buildings. Still, using resin allows more fine detail to be shown and faster development time for new collections, which Hawthorne Village® churns out at an astonishing rate. As an example, they are currently making at least eight village collections based on the work of artist Thomas Kinkade® , eight Halloween-themed collections, and dozens more.

Hawthorne Village collections are sold almost exclusively through "subscription." That is, you buy the first in the series and order the rest, and you get and pay for one piece about every four weeks. Although this confuses some buyers, most folks who get the first one like it so much they remain subscribed for several more pieces, if not for the rest of the series.

One of the more popular Hawthorne Village collections is Christmas in New York. The footprint for most Hawthorne Village buildings is in the 7" x 7" or 8" by 8" range.



Another Hawthorne Village collection that commands high resale prices is the The Simpsons village. Here is a 2015 Simpsons Christmas Village (4:22) by Jon Canfield

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unnUzPKfQJg>.

It's a flyover, sometimes dizzy, but shows off a complete Hawthorne Village collection that's now rare and expensive.

Other Hawthorne Village collections include Elvis Presley Rock N Roll Christmas Village, Rudolph's Christmas Town, Stockbridge or Porchlight Collection, Village of Horror Classics, Civil War Village, Star Wars Galactic Village, Nightmare Before Christmas, Munsters, Mayberry Village, America's Most Haunted Village, NFL Team Village (choose yours), Coca Cola Village Series, and many, many more.

O'Well manufactured buildings, accessories, and figures in China under many labels. A partial list includes Heartland Valley Village (sold by Ace Hardware stores), Dickens Collectables [sic], Santa's Workbench (sold by JoAnn Fabrics Centers), early Holiday Time (sold by Walmart), Dicken's Keepsake, Harborside Village, Grandeur Noel (sold by Sam's Club), Traditional Vintage, Cowboy Christmas, Copperfield Keepsake, Victorian Village Collectables [sic], and Sugarplum Valley.



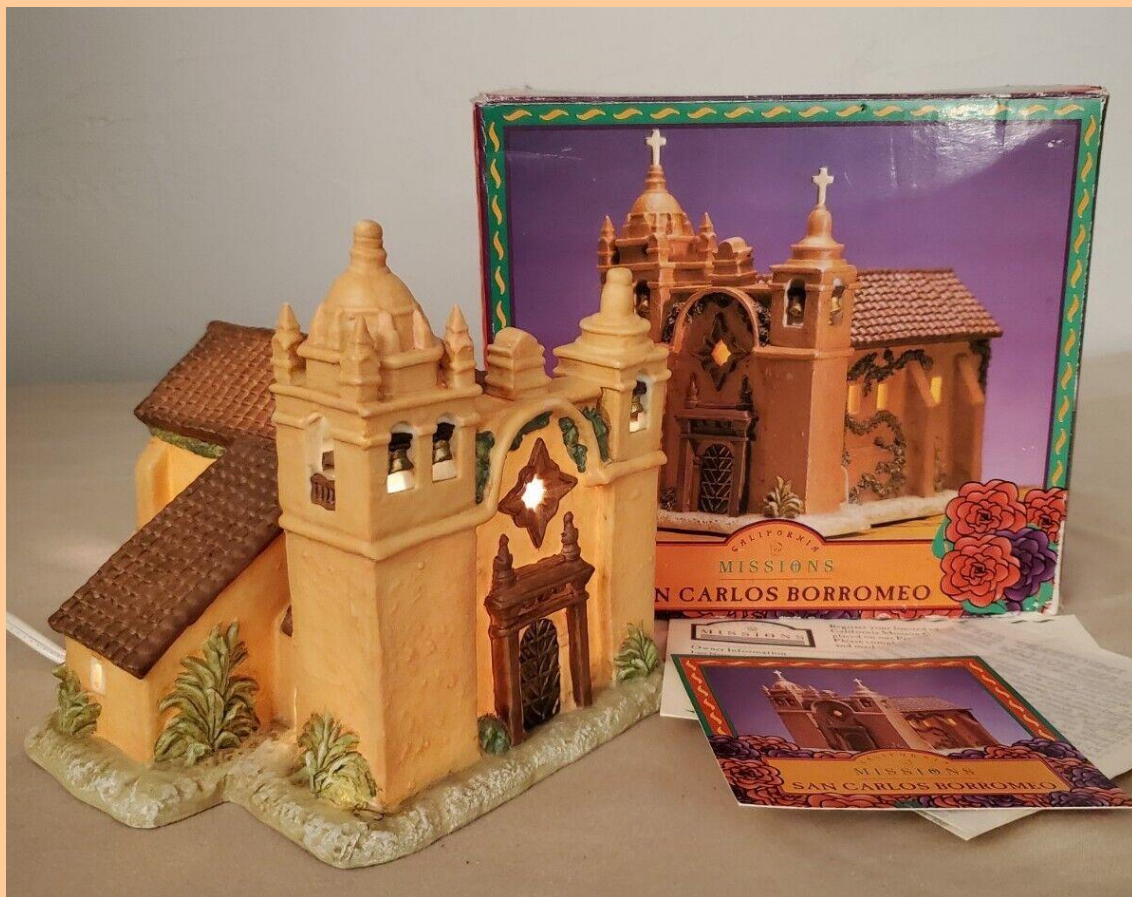


They were sued (by JoAnns I think) because they made the same buildings under different labels, just changing the color or the name on the building when the building was supposed to be unique to that one label. They went out of the village business. Their figures were especially nice. They also made lovely nativity sets.

In 2005, Santa's Workbench issued a Retro Ville Collection of 10 buildings and numerous accessories.

Another popular collection in the early 2000s was Mervyn's Village Square. They had fairly large and heavy buildings, and their figures were oversized at about 3.5" tall.

A great collection for California villagers was Mervyn's California Mission Churches (San Juan Capistrano, San Francisco de Asis, San Diego de Alcalá, Santa Clara de Asis, San Carlos Borromeo, La Purísima Conception, Santa Barbara, Santa Ines, San Fernando Rey de España, San Antonio de Padua, San Jose, San Francisco Solano, San Miguel Arcangel, San Gabriel, San Buenaventura, and San Rafael).



Lang & Wise was another brand that specialized in a colonial Williamsburg collection. These pieces are well made with good detail.



Enesco introduced a collection called Miracle on 34th Street, modeled after the 1947 and 1994 films.



How many different brands of Christmas village buildings are there? Well, I compiled a list over a year while perusing eBay listings, and there are at least 80 different manufacturers!

If you have a village collection, show your village to the world! Put it on YouTube. We want to see it!

In my next column on The Village Collector, I don't know what I'm going to write about. I'm out of words for today and I'll try to do better next time.

Questions, comments and/or suggestions are always welcome.
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