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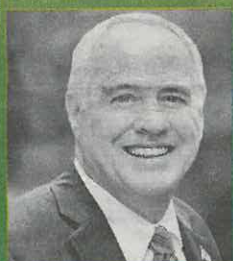
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Conde Toy Shops: A Store that Provided Much More Than Fun

For several years prior to becoming a toy store owner, Harry L. Conde was president of the Syracuse Automobile Taxi Cab Company, reputed to be the first taxi cab company in Syracuse. Conde's company also sold early 20th-century vehicles, including the Brush and the Thomas. Conde was Syracuse's exclusive sales agent for the Thomas automobile, made in Buffalo from 1900 to 1919.

BY THOMAS HUNTER

In the early 20th century, Conde frequently advertised his used cars for sale and engaged himself in automobile-related endeavors. Why he switched from selling and promoting autos to selling and promoting toys in 1919 is left to speculation. Conde founded the Conde Toy Shops in 1919 at 345 E. Onondaga St. in the Hotel Seymour building. Later that year, he moved his business to 436 South Warren St. Conde placed an advertisement in the *Syracuse Herald* newspaper, featuring Sammy Smiles, an Erector Set type figure that became the iconic Conde Toy Shops logo for almost 40 years. Conde's long-standing tag line also appeared in the early ad: "Surprise the Kiddies! / Take Home a Toy." In the 1919 ad, Conde promoted a phonograph, miniature organs, and the Keystone Moviegraph projector and films. The diminutive silent-movie projector, made in Boston for home viewing, projected 35mm-shortened versions of theatrically released films.

During the following year, 1920, the Conde Toy Shops advertised a Buster Brown doll, complete with its own wig. Created as comic-strip characters in 1902, Buster Brown and his faithful dog, Tige, appeared in newspapers until the early 1920s. As mascots of the Brown Shoe Company, the pair helped sell thousands of shoes to boys and girls, and the brand is still sold today.

In November 1925, Conde Toy Shops arrayed the store windows with toys for Christmas that had been made right at the shop. As far back as the previous February, store employees, William Parsons and Fred Norton, began making handcrafted toys that were more distinctive than those simply shipped to Syracuse from other manufacturing locations. Parsons and Norton took pride in creating complete sets of Noah's Ark, dollhouses with electric lights, rope swings, sandboxes, and children's furniture. These men also made semaphore traffic signals complete with a lantern on top that allowed children to pretend that they controlled local traffic from the safety of their sidewalks.

During the Great Depression years, Conde Toy Shops managed to stay in business and sell toys, especially for Christmas gifts. Harry Conde promoted the toy store as a fairy toyland where children's voracious appetites for

toys could be satisfied. By this time, Conde had moved his store to 480 South Salina St., where he stayed until 1936, when he moved it to 452 South Warren St.

With World War II raging in Europe, Conde Toy Shops played a vital role in assisting with war-relief efforts by becoming one of two local headquarters for the charitable-relief organization known as Bundles for Britain, a division of the British War Relief Society. Founded in 1940 by Natalie Wales Latham of New York City, members knitted hats, scarves, socks, and sweaters to send to war-torn British citizens. Within 16 months, Bundles for Britain had expanded to 975 local branches throughout the U.S. American citizens collected and shipped knitted items and used clothing. Syracuse formed its own branch that offered two types of tangible relief. Used clothing and recyclable material was collected at the Everybody's Book Shop on East Fayette Street. New items bearing the logo of the British War Relief Society (a lion and shield) emblazoned on silk kerchiefs, lapel pins, playing cards, even suede bridge table covers, could be purchased at the Conde Toy Shops on South Warren Street. Money generated from these sales purchased clothing, medical equipment, and medicines for British citizens. Bundles for Britain became such a popular relief cause that by the end of World War II, the organization had shipped \$1.5 million in goods and had raised another \$1 million in cash.

In 1945, as World War II ended, Harry Conde retired as president of the toy store, selling his business to toy store employees Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Jeffery. After the war, Conde Toy Shops left behind its war-relief efforts and looked optimistically to the future of toy sales. In 1946, the store offered a lever-action ice-hockey game distributed by D. Stewart Robinson in Syracuse's State Tower Building. Also that same year, Conde Toy Shops had to vacate its location at 452 South Warren St. to make way for the new W.T. Grant store. To accommodate the construction of the new mass merchandise store, Conde moved across the street to 349 South Warren. This location would be the store's last physical relocation until its closing.

Throughout most of the 1950s, Conde Toy Shops continued to sell a wide variety of toys. The store also

Business Calendar

MARCH 14

■ **Creating a Magnetic Brand as a Professional Speaker** from 8:30 to 10 a.m. at The Tech Garden 235 Harrison St., Syracuse. Getting speaking engagements is a great way to make an impact, grow your business, and build awareness. This presentation, by Arel Moodie, will show you how to create a magnetic brand as a professional speaker that attracts clients. The cost is \$20 for CenterState CEO members, and \$30 for nonmembers. To register, visit www.centerstate-ceo.com or email: kdejoseph@centerstateceo.com

MARCH 15

■ **Simple Steps for Starting Your Business** from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St., Syracuse. This is the last in a series of workshops presented by SCORE. The cost is \$100, but it's free for veterans. Call (315) 471-9393, ext. 245 for questions or to sign up.

MARCH 15 & 22

■ **Comprehensive Seminars on Starting Up and Operating a Small Business offered at SUNY Poly** from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at SUNY Polytechnic Institute (formerly SUNYIT), 100 Seymour Road, Utica, Kunsela Hall. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) presents "Modular Course for Entrepreneurs." Pre-registration is required. Call the SBDC @ (315) 792-7547 or email: palazzp@sunyit.edu. A full list of topics may be found on the SBDC website: www.sunyit.edu/sbdc_0

MARCH 16

■ **Workforce Development – Everyone's Pot of Gold** from 8 to 10 a.m. at WCNV, 416 W. Fayette St., Syracuse. CNY ATD will discuss learning nuggets, delivering content to learners in small, specific bursts. The cost for ATD members is \$25; nonmembers pay \$40. To register, visit www.cnyastd.org. For more information, email info@cnyastd.org or call (315) 315-546-2783.

■ **Operation: Start Up & Grow Veteran Business Conference** from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the SRC Arena and Events Center on the OCC campus. Do you want to start a business? Expand your existing business? Find all the resources in one location at this free conference for veteran entrepreneurs. For more information, call the SBA at (315) 471-9393 ext. 233. Or, visit: <https://www.sba.gov/offices/district/ny/syracuse/resources/operation-start-grow>. Direct registration is available at: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/2017-operation-start-up-grow-veteran-business-conference-small-business-registration-tickets-28456939472>

■ **Mental Illness: What you need to know in the Workplace** seminar from 8 to 10:30 a.m. at Bella Domani, 5988 E. Taft Road, Cicero. This is CNY SHRM's March event for the business and human resource community. The panelists will be Kerry Langan, labor and employment law attorney from Bond, Schoeneck & King; Katelin Arnold, HR professional; and Dr. Shannon Stewart Forshee, licensed clinical and forensic psychologist. The cost is \$45 for members, and \$55 for nonmembers. For more information, or to register, visit <http://cnyshrm.org>

■ **Greater Oneida Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours** event from 5 to 7 p.m. at Commonfund

Mortgage Corp, 210 Farrier Ave., Oneida. No charge for members; nonmembers pay \$10. For more information or to RSVP, email: office@oneidachamberny.org

MARCH 16-17

■ **Sixth NOFA-NY Organic Dairy & Field Crop Conference** at the Holiday Inn Syracuse/Liverpool at 441 Electronics Parkway. The event welcomes veteran farmers, beginning farmers, and those interested in transitioning to organic management. The keynote speaker will be Jack Lazor, co-founder of Butterworks Farm. For the complete conference schedule and other details, visit <http://bit.ly/2k9sAOU>

MARCH 22

■ **Speed Networking** from 8 to 10 a.m. at TERACAI, 217 Lawrence Road. E., North Syracuse. Bring your business cards and be prepared to engage in roundtable discussions while building relationships with other CenterState CEO members. Registration at 7:30 a.m. The cost is \$15 for CenterState members and \$25 for nonmembers. To register, visit www.centerstateceo.com or email: kdejoseph@centerstateceo.com

MARCH 23

■ **2017 Book of Lists Reveal Party** from 5 to 7 p.m. Genesee Grand Hotel, 1060 E. Genesee St., Syracuse. Receive your copy of the *Book of Lists* in advance (\$51.50 value). Tickets are \$30 for BJNN subscribers and \$35 for nonsubscribers. To register, visit BizEventz.com. For more information, contact Joyl Clance at jlclance@bizeventz.com

MARCH 27

■ **TACNY Celebration of Technology Awards Banquet** beginning at 5 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, 441 Electronics Parkway, Liverpool. The keynote speaker at this year's event is Dr. Peter Saulson, a member of the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) team that recently confirmed a portion of Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity. The event begins at 5 p.m. with a cash bar and expo, followed by dinner at 6 p.m., and the awards program beginning at 6:45 p.m. The cost is \$40 for adults and \$25 for students (K-12). For more information or to register, visit: www.tacny.org. Direct any questions to: celebration@tacny.org

MARCH 28

■ **2017 Nonprofit Awards** from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, Liverpool. Networking from 11 a.m. to noon, and lunch and awards program from noon to 2 p.m. This event seeks to highlight the achievements of the nonprofit honorees in each category and provides the opportunity to learn more about what is happening in the CNY nonprofit community. For more information, visit www.bizeventz.com

MARCH 30

■ **2017 Economic Summit**, presented by the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce and Tompkins County Area Development, from 12-2 p.m. at the Country Club of Ithaca, 189 Pleasant Grove Road, Ithaca. The event will discuss the opportunities

for the Tompkins County community in the years ahead, and how your business or organization can capitalize on them. Cost is \$35 for members/\$40 for non-members. For more information, visit: <http://business.tompkinschamber.org/events/calendar/> or email: marilyn@tompkinschamber.org

APRIL 11

■ **Fourth Annual Celebrating Inclusion & Achieving Independence Dinner and Award Ceremony** at the Oncenter in Syracuse. Alex Truesdell, executive director and founder of the Adaptive Design Association, will deliver the keynote address at the event being held by ARISE. Tickets for the dinner event can be purchased by visiting ariseinc.org/dinner or contacting Cynda Penfield at (315) 671-2909 or cpenfield@ariseinc.org

MAY 4

■ **Mohawk Valley Legacy Awards** from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Stanley Theatre in Utica. Local entrepreneurs who have built thriving corporations and have also supported their communities will be recognized. Black tie is optional. For more information, contact Joyl Clance at (315) 708-3303 or email: jlclance@bizeventz.com

MAY 18

■ **The Cayuga County Chamber of Commerce 2017 Business Awards Luncheon** from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Springside Inn. Seeking nominations with a Feb. 28 deadline. Visit www.cayugacountychamber.com for more information.

ONGOING EVENTS

■ **Every Tuesday, Cayuga Toastmasters Club** from 6 to 7 p.m., at Cornell University, Ithaca, Rhodes Hall, Hoy Road, 6th Floor Conference Room #655. Free parking is available on first floor of parking garage across from Rhodes Hall. For more information, visit the website at 4998.toastmastersclubs.org and select "Contact Us," or email: Jeff at jefurst52@gmail.com

■ **Every Tuesday Gung Ho Referrals Group**, the premier networking group in CNY since 1999, from noon to 1:30 p.m. at The Gem Diner, 832 Spencer St., Syracuse. The cost is \$10 and includes lunch. No reservation required. Please bring 30 business cards. For more information contact Paul Ellis at (315) 475-0392 or email Paul.Ellis@ComfortSystemsUSA.com or go to www.GungHoReferrals.com

■ **Every Tuesday, CNY Referral Group** from 8 to 9:30 a.m. at Denny's Restaurant, 201 Lawrence Road, North Syracuse. Looking to expand your network and increase referral business? For more information, call Matthew Hunt at (315) 416-8881, or email: huntm24@nationwide.com

■ **Every Tuesday, Syracuse Executives Association** luncheon meeting, beginning at 11:45 a.m. at Bella Domani Banquet Facility, 5988 East Taft Road, North Syracuse. For more information, contact Linda Bennett, executive director, by email at: director@syrexecs.com

■ **Every Tuesday, Syracuse Networking Connections** at 8 a.m. at Dunkin' Donuts, 7th North St. (Conference Room). No charge to attend. Contact Kim at (315) 414-8223.

■ **Every Wednesday, 1 Million Cups** at 9 a.m. at Syracuse CoWorks, 201 E. Jefferson St., 2nd floor, Syracuse. 1 Million Cups is a weekly educational program designed to engage, educate,

and accelerate local startups/unique businesses. No cost to attend. For more information, visit www.1millioncups.com/syracuse

■ **Every Wednesday, Syracuse Business Networking** from 6 to 7 p.m. at Barbieri's Restaurant (upstairs level) located on Main Street in the village of North Syracuse. For more information, call Kim Bachstein at (315) 414-8223 or email: info@SyracuseBusinessNetworking.com

■ **Every Wednesday, The Orange Network Business Luncheon** from noon to 1 p.m. at AXA Tower, 19th Floor, Syracuse. Call or email Tim Martin for more information at tmartin@esssecurity.net or (315) 380-3032.

■ **First and third Wednesday of each month, Preferred Toastmasters** from noon to 1 p.m. at Golden Artist Colors, 188 Bell Road, New Berlin. Contact Jonie Bassett at (607) 847-6154, x1217.

■ **Fourth Wednesday of each month, Preferred Toastmasters** from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Chenango County Council of the Arts, 27 W. Main St., Norwich. Contact Jonie Bassett at (607) 847-6154, x1217.

■ **Every Thursday, Empire Statesmen Toastmasters** meet at 6:30 p.m. at Ruby Tuesday on Erie Boulevard in DeWitt. For more information, visit <http://1427.toastmastersclubs.org> or email: contact-1427@toastmastersclubs.org

■ **Every Thursday, Free Business Counseling with SCORE** from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at the Tioga County Chamber of Commerce, 80 North Ave., Owego. Contact the Tioga County Chamber of Commerce to make an appointment at (607) 687-2020.

■ **Every Thursday, Syracuse Business Connections** meets from 8am - 9 am in E. Syracuse. The group's purpose is to network, exchange referrals, leads and share community news. For more information, contact Deb Angarano at dangarano@tsys.com

■ **Every second and fourth Thursday of the month, The North Star Toastmasters** from noon to 1 p.m. at Northland Communications One Dupli Park Drive in Franklin Square. For more information, contact Sandy Jurkiewicz at sjurkiewicz@centerstateceo.com or call (315) 470-1802.

■ **Every Friday, 40 Above: Workers in Transition** from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the library in North Syracuse (NOPL) at 100 Trolleybarn Lane, North Syracuse. Helping workers/job seekers aged 40 and above in search of work. Contact John A. Cruty at (315) 569-3964, or at crutij@yahoo.com

■ **Every Friday, Tip Club of Syracuse**, at the Sheraton Syracuse University Hotel, 801 University Ave., Syracuse, 8 to 9 a.m. Call Bernie Bregman at (315) 430-5249 or email: bbregman@cnybj.com

■ **First Friday of each month, Toolkit Day with SCORE** by appointment at The Tech Garden. Counselors provide free, confidential, individual business mentoring to prospective or current business owners. For more information or to make an appointment, contact Lynn Hughes at (315) 579-2862 or email Lynn@TheTechGarden.com

■ **Every second Friday, The Professional Consultants Association (PCA) of Central New York** at 8:15 a.m. from September to June at OneGroup Center, 706 N. Clinton St., Syracuse. PCA helps businesses and organizations locate professional consulting services based in CNY. The first visit is free. For a full schedule and to register, visit: www.pcaofcny.com

■ **Every second and fourth Friday of each month, The SUN Group** (Sustainable Upstate Network) meets from 7:30 to 9 a.m. at Tony's Family Restaurant, 3004 Burnet Ave., Syracuse. For more information, contact Andy Picco at (315) 657-0135 or email: andrewpicco@gmail.com

CONDE TOY SHOP: Between 1919 & 1957, many Onondaga County children enjoyed playing with toys purchased at Conde Toy Shops

Continued from page 6

co-sponsored a local radio program every Saturday, along with Park-Brannock Shoe Store, on WSYR. The radio shows discussed diverse family topics, such as "Families Can Be Fun!" In the early 1950s, the store had expanded to three floors and its merchandise for sale included carriages, cribs, clothing chests, and youth beds. In the summer months, Conde Toy Shops advertised backyard swimming pools, rope swings, and other outdoor playthings. Before Halloween, the store sold popular Mouseketeer and Rin-Tin-Tin costumes. During the Christmas season, the store stocked its shelves with typical 1950's toys, games, and dolls.

With all this growth and activity, it seemed Conde Toy Shops would last forever. But after having been in business for nearly 40 years, the good times would soon end for Conde Toy Shops.

In 1957, Reuben Jeffery closed Conde Toy Shops and sold the building to Sol Schneir, a local shoe retailer, for about \$100,000. Jeffery stated that two of his reasons for selling the toy shop included limited downtown parking (a recurring complaint) and the recent passage of a \$1 minimum-wage law that affected retail stores.

Undoubtedly, between 1919 & 1957, many Onondaga County children enjoyed playing with toys pur-

chased at Conde Toy Shops.

After Jeffery sold the building, the Syracuse City Directory listed this address as either being vacant or as the location for a few different businesses. The Manufacturers Shoe Outlet was located there in 1965 and Erie Imports retail store in 1975. Pavone's Pizza moved into 349 South Warren St. in 1984 and that business still occupies the building today.

In 2014, following some renovation work to the building's façade, the pizza shop revealed the former Conde Toy Shop sign above the first-floor entrance. Unfortunately, the company installing a new Pavone's sign

was unable to save the nostalgic Conde sign and had to remove it. Several local senior citizens still have fond memories of Conde Toy Shops and can recall the hours of fun the store's toys provided them. So, if you're one of those senior citizens, look for your Monopoly board game or your old Mouseketeer Halloween costume; maybe you still have a piece of Syracuse's long lost toy and business history. ■

Thomas Hunter is the curator of museum collections at the Onondaga Historical Association (OHA) (www.cnyhistory.org), located at 321 Montgomery St. in Syracuse.