

Santa Claus Is Coming to Town

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The Whitehall Forum on November 16, 1950, announced that Santa Claus would make a preliminary visit to the Whitehall area on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. He would arrive in a Whitehall fire truck and be escorted to the middle of the business district around 10 a.m. The streets would be roped off so as to detour traffic around the crowds of youngsters that were expected to be on hand.

With the assistance of a group of businessmen, Santa will pass candy canes out to the small visitors, take gift requests, and then visit the various stores to inspect their stocks, give away more candy and chat with the youngsters.

Russell J. Klinefelter was the chairman of the Santa greeters' committee and was assisted by Paul Jensen and George Nelson.

Santa Claus himself, complete in white beard, stomach and red suit, was on hand on Saturday morning December 1, 1951. He came into town on the big red Whitehall fire engine, siren wailing and hell clanging, and preceded and escorted by the Whitehall High School band.

Once again Santa will have candy ready for giving away to the young people on hand who welcome him and then he is expected to while away an hour or so inspecting the stores stock of Christmas gift items. Russell Klinefelter was assisted by Paul Jensen and Al Klump. Then City Manager Howard Gwinnup promised that the Christmas lights and decoration were in place so that Santa feels right at home when he arrives.

Santa was met at Slocum Park at 11 a.m. by the Whitehall Fire Department and the Whitehall High School band on Saturday, December 5, 1953. He was brought from the park to the downtown area which was roped off. Free candy was distributed to the children, and he accepted any lists, letters and written reminders from his admirers. The school band, under the direction of Albert Meerzo, gave a short concert on Colby Street.

Santa was seen in the business district throughout the day from 9 to 12, 2 to 5 in the afternoon and from 7 to 8 in the evening. Whitehall merchants have agreed to keep their stores open every evening until 9 p.m. except on Christmas eve, however, when the stores will close at 6 o'clock.

Once again the firemen escorted Santa when he arrived on Saturday morning, December 4, 1954. He came to the corner of Colby and Mears where he distributed his candy canes to all his young admirers.

Special Christmas decorations were put out on the posts by the city crew under the direction of City Manager Howard Gwinnup. Plaques of Santas and Dickens figures decorated the light poles in the business district and the poles were decorated with greenery. Many stores also had special decoration for their store fronts.

Whitehall's Christmas shopping season officially opened with the traditional visit from St. Nicholas when he arrived on Saturday, December 10, 1955. Again, he was taken aboard the city fire truck and escorted to the downtown business district by the Whitehall High School Band, under the direction of Howard Parks. The band then played a concert in the business district while St. Nick slipped candy canes and other goodies to his little admirers. It seems that last year Santa almost ran out of treats and goodies to hand out, so this year there were extra elves on hand. This year the City Council along with the City Manager John Kane, are cooperating to make sure no such situation arises.

R. J. Klinefelder and George Bell are the chairmen of the Retail Merchants Committee in charge of making sure Santa will like things around Whitehall so well that perhaps they can get him to make a return trip on Saturday, December 17.

On December 8, 1956, Santa was overwhelmed by a crowd of admirers who welcomed him to town. It was estimated that more than 500 parents and children were present. Santa made another quick trip to the area on December 15.

Leading the procession for the arrival of St. Nick on December 7, 1957 will the Whitehall High School band, headed by Director Armstrong. Nick was riding in state on one of the city fire trucks, escorted by members of the Whitehall Fire Department. The procession proceeded to North Mears Avenue, between the bank and Klinefelter's, which were roped off for the safety of Santa's small admirers.

Thousands welcomed Santa to Whitehall on December 9, 1961. At the time it was reported to be the largest crowd on hand. Walter Delaney and his ponies greeted Santa and escorted him downtown. The parade was led by Mayor Richard Cogswell & Chamber of Commerce President Arthur Brierley, and also included the high school band. There were also several floats that were built by High School classes.

Some 5,000 persons were expected to greet Santa on his arrival to town on Saturday, December 1, 1962. Thirteen units were scheduled to take part in what might be the largest Christmas parade ever held. Taking part in the parade were the high school band, homecoming king and queen, Miss White Lake, Whitehall's Mayor and president of the Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion color guard. The fire truck and duck, the championship football teams and several other floats. The high school glee club planned to follow the parade with a short program and there were also clowns for entertainment.

And so it has continued over the years to what it is today.

Ho, ho, ho. Merry Christmas!