



*Preserving, promoting, and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.*

## CULTURAL MOMENT FOR DECEMBER 5TH CELEBRATES **SANTA CLAUS PARADES**

The Santa Claus Parade is not an original concept. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word 'parade' is used to refer to a 'pompous show' rather than a public procession.

Ancient cities often had special, elaborately constructed streets for their processions. The earliest reference to a parade is found in cave paintings dating back ten thousand years. These events consisted of prehistoric men triumphantly carrying the game they killed back to their camp.

The idea for the Santa Claus parade originated with Eaton's Company in Toronto as a promotion for their department stores. The first parade was held on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1905 with a single float. It became the largest Santa Claus parade by the 1950's and Eaton's ended its association with the parade in 1982. Today, it is funded by corporate sponsors.

Before Mount Forest began having a Santa Claus Parade, The Lions Club had Santa Comes To Town which began in 1939. Tickets were given to children to attend the movie theatre and at the end of the movie Santa would appear and the children received bags of candy. One year, Santa arrived by helicopter to the Fire Hall.



The Santa Claus Parades, in Mount Forest, were originally held on a Saturday afternoon beginning in 1975. In 1988 the parades started to be held on Friday evenings to promote more business involvement. This is believed to be the first night time parade in southwestern Ontario. There have been as many as 85 bands/floats. During Covid 2020 and 2021 a very successful 'Reverse Parade' was held to continue the uninterrupted reputation of bringing Santa To Town. In 2022 the plans are to hold a traditional night parade on the usual 1<sup>st</sup> Friday in December.



The evening parades in Arthur and Mount Forest have a magical feeling with the floats being lit up, and the stars overhead. While they offer businesses and organizations recognition with their decorated floats, they also offer the residents, especially the children (young and old), some good old-fashioned fun and a beginning to the Christmas spirit.

Submitted by Penny Renken on behalf of the Wellington North Cultural Roundtable