

News from the Port

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Letter from the Editor

By: H.R.R.

"Some Children see him lily white... some children see Him bronzed and brown ...some children see Him almond eyed...some children see Him dark as they...the children in each different place. Oh lay aside each earthly thing and bring Peace to the earth." Partial quotes from a children's Christmas Hymn by Alfred S. Burt

When discussing our history we oft time forget how many different people and lands have contributed to our history.

May the "NEW YEAR" bring us all much Peace and Joy. Kindness to our Neighbor is the secret.



NEW WEBSITE

Quiltsandtea.com

Davenport Historical Society Page

History. Calendar and photos of past events and organizations sponsored by the DHS may be found on this site.

City of Davenport Website

Mydavenport.org

President's Message

With the Holidays near I want to wish all our DHS members and families Happy Holidays and good Health for the New Year.

DHS had a wonderful 2018. The quarterly presentations were a hit. Thank you to all that

spoke and those who came to learn about Davenport's history. Watch our newsletter for the 2019 presentations and projects. DHS plans to have our artifacts moved to storage with the City in early Jan. 2019. Thanks to the City for their help.

By: Brenda Dolan
DHS had a fun night at Winterfest participating in the parade and a table in the park. There was a huge crowd.

May you have a wonderful rest of 2018. See you in 2019.

Following the Heritage Trail By Judith Thompson

*Oranges, Pecans,
Candy, Apples &
Peanuts for the
Children of
Davenport.
All delivered by
Santa to Wilson
Park & Jamestown
Many years He
came on the 1927
American La
France fire engine
on Christmas Eve.*

Davenport's Christmas celebrations in the past and present

The town of Davenport has always loved celebrations, especially Christmas. In 1927, many of Davenport's residents could not afford to have a Christmas celebration. The Town of Davenport and the Volunteer Fire Department decided to sponsor a Christmas Eve celebration for the town. A large Christmas tree was put up in Wilson Park. One resident drove to Georgia where a friend gave him a load of pecans. Holly Hill supplied an orange for every bag and even the bag. Other residents provided the Christmas boxes and the hard Christmas candy. Many volunteers worked together to fill enough bags for every child in Davenport. On Christmas Eve just after dark, the firemen came rushing with sirens blaring to bring Santa to the park. Several years later, the firetruck took Santa to both Wilson Park and the park in Jamestown where each child received a Christmas bag.

Over time, the town planted a tree instead of using a cut tree. In the 1980's the pecans became too expensive to buy and were substituted with peanuts. Some of the local churches began holding their Christmas programs on Christmas Eve. The firetruck bringing Santa was so loud the city changed the "Santa in the Park" to a different night. "Santa in the Park" ended in 2007.

Other celebrations replaced "Santa in the Park". The Chamber of Commerce had a Christmas lighting contest with the awarding of 1st, 2nd and 3rd place for Residential and Business awards. This was started in 1989, but didn't last very long.

In 1996, the "City Lights, Cypress Nights" was created. The 17 municipalities in Polk County all had a theme for decorating their city, i.e. Davenport-Holly, Haines City-Angels, Lake Alfred-Toys, Winter Haven-Poinsettias, etc. It all started when Cypress Gardens had thousands of lights and wanted to partner with the cities to make it a county-wide project. A map and signs were provided for viewers to follow to see the lighted houses during the season. It usually kicked off after Thanksgiving. Davenport had a "Holly Light Tour" that was originally started as part of the "City Lights, Cypress Nights". Some neighborhoods and RV communities still have light tours in other parts of the county.

Davenport also had a "Twilight Festival", which began in 1996 on Market Street. The street was closed to traffic and live Christmas Trees were set up down the middle of the street. Different schools and organizations decorated the trees and then the trees and decorations were given to families who might not otherwise have a Christmas tree. It poured rain during the "Twilight Festival" and all the trees had to be moved into the Methodist Church Fellowship Hall.

Heritage Trail cont. from pg. 2

In the following years, the "Twilight Festival" was moved to Lake Play and the Davenport United Methodist Church's first bell ringers were part of the program. It was a fun time with vendors selling their wares, elves helping children decorate cookies and even Santa Claus himself enjoying the festivities. It was held a couple of years in conjunction with the "Holly Light Tour".

For three or four years there was a live nativity play at Market Square and Lake Play with children reenacting the original nativity story, The program included a sing-along of Christmas carols and a narration of the Christmas story from the Bible. All the above events were sponsored by the Davenport Historical Society, Davenport United Methodist Church (DUMC) and the City of Davenport and were free to the public.

The DUMC had "Come to the Manger" free to the public, This display consisted of over 300 nativity scenes with stables, shepherds, wise men, baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph and were loaned by private collectors, citizens of the Davenport area, It was available for viewing for nearly one week.

The First Baptist Church has sponsored their live driving Nativity for many years and it is usually held the first or second week in December. It continues today.

When "Santa in the Park" ended in 2007, the City started another Christmas event. It has several names over the years, but is now called "Winterfest". The year it was started was the first year we had snow at the Davenport Christmas festivities, The annual Christmas Parade is held at night with every entry being illuminated with Christmas lights,. The parade continues to grow larger each year and attracts visitors from surrounding communities, The parade ends at Wilson Park where vendors will be located. In addition to Winterfest, there are other opportunities to Share Christmas. The Festival of Trees in Market Square, "Sharing Christmas with you" gifts for children.

I would like to thank Harriet Rust, Kenny Gill and Rachel Castillo Young for their research.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Judith Torgersen Thompson



Santa Did Arrive in Davenport on Christmas Eve for over 75 years on a fire engine!

Vice President Notes

By: Kathy B. Linder

I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and the Happiest of New Year. Looking forward to what 2019 hold for the Davenport Historical Society.

See You All in January.

*Happy
New Year!
What will 2019
Bring ???*

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COMING IN 2019

Davenport Historical Society, Inc. WELCOMES all who would like to join our group. Saving the history of Davenport is our goal. You do not have to live in the City or have lived here a long time.

Please call or visit Linda Tyler at Linda's Hair Care in the Mart downtown or call 863-422-7179 to get more information about membership in DHS.

DHS new location

Field Trips to parts unknown

Volunteer (do you know how valuable you are?) Call Kathy: 863-221-1021

We are researching interest in Resurrecting Davenport Arts and Cultural Alliance. A portion of this organization is active "Davenport Plein Air", they meet on Saturdays throughout the county to paint. Call Bonnie or email her for more information: 863-207-0407

Email: bliss@

To hear more about DACA or to relate your interest in Music, Art, Dance etc. Email Harriet quiltsandtea.com or call 863-258-7800

Wouldn't a community band, art lessons, chorus, quartet, jam sessions, photography class be fun? Know you have suggestions too. Let us hear from you.

We're on the Web
Quiltsandtea.com
DHS page
Mydavenport.org
Historical Page



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TO

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