

History of Forest Hills Winter Holiday By Cheryl Cuddeback

The history of The Forest Hills Gardens Celebrations go as far back as 1914. Basically, two annual events were held; a Fourth of July Celebration and Christmas Eve.

In 1922, the Forest Hills Celebrations Association was officially formed. Over time, since most residents spent their summers in Long Island, the Fourth of July Festivities were replaced with Children's Day, an event that takes place at The Flag Pole Green on the first Saturday after Memorial Day, weather permitting.

The Christmas Eve Celebration pretty much has stayed the same over time. In its early years the Men's Chorus and Torch Bearers would meet at the Sales Office to practice their songs. This particular building existed where the Leslie Apartments is located today. Both entities joined Santa Claus on two decorated floats meandering through the curvy roads of The Gardens. Later that evening neighbors and friends would gather in Station Square to not only sing Christmas Carols but also to watch Santa Claus join the crowd while on his float. Back then the display by the steps to the Long Island Railroad in Station Square was depicted as a large Fireplace.

Another Christmas Event also took place outside of The Gardens. In 1924 on Christmas Day, The Forest Hills Association of the Cord Meyer Township coordinated an Annual Meeting at Public School 3. While Parents celebrated the day, children were entertained by the President of the Entertainment Committee, namely Wilfred Cuddeback, my grandfather, of Livingston Street, now known as 69th Ave. What a surprise to learn about this. Just shows you what you can learn when doing a little digging.



Forest Hills Gardens Christmas tradition still take place today even with a few changes. Instead of two floats circling the neighborhood only one float navigates the narrow curves of Ivy Close and Bye Street. We can still hear Santa ho ho-ing, as well as asking parked cars to move.



Another changed tradition is our Christmas tree in Station Square. Each year a tree was purchased for decoration. Yet in the early 60's a new Christmas Tree was permanently planted in the Square. True, it's not as tall as the

Rockefeller Tree yet we have the gift of watching it grow over time.

Station Square is not just a venue for celebrating the Christmas Holiday. Over time the Chanukah is also included in Forest Hills Winter Celebrations. For eight evenings in December a group of people watch the lighting of a new candle by the Menorah in Station Square. The ambience is one of community and celebration. All are welcomed, even a shiksah like me.