

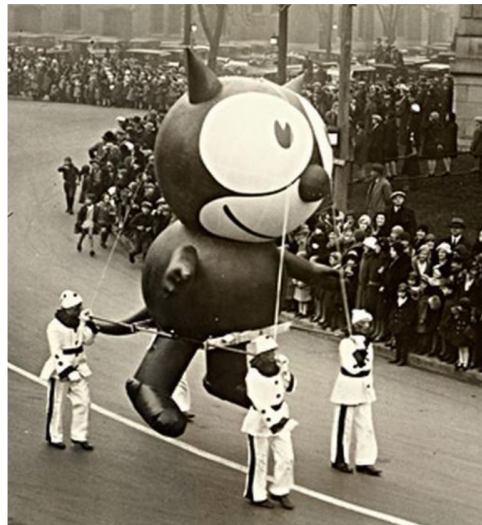
# History of New York's Thanksgiving Parade

## By Cheryl Cuddeback

Actually, the first American Thanksgiving Parade took place in Philadelphia in 1920 and was sponsored by Gimbels, a major department store from back in the day. However the most popular parade honoring our country's November Holiday is The Macy's Day parade.

This iconic parade began in Newark, NJ in 1924 by the then popular chain store Bambergers. Later Macy's took over and moved the parade across the Hudson River to its prize store on 34<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. Originally the parade was meant to be a Christmas celebration intended to promote the store. Macy's employees, dressed as clowns and cowboys made up the majority of marchers. They'd walk six miles from Harlem to Herald Square. Early parade floats were pulled by horses. Live animals from the Central Park Zoo also participated.

Eventually these live animals were replaced with balloons. The first balloon depicted was Felix the Cat, a once popular children's cartoon character.



Over time other cartoon characters appeared in balloons such as Mickey Mouse, The Tin Man, Pinocchio and many others.



**Mickey Mouse**



**Tin Man**



**Pinocchio**

During World War II the parade was deferred due to a need for rubber and helium. Yet after the war the parade became a prominent Thanksgiving fixture. It was featured in the 1947 film, *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*. Not only did this movie include actual footage of the 1946 parade but it also featured an unknown yet up and coming movie actress who

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eventually moved to Forest Hills Gardens, Thelma Ritter. However her name doesn't appear in the movie's original credits.



Thelma Ritter in Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup>  
Street



Thelma Ritter with her husband at Sunday Coffee  
Hour at The-Church-in-The-Gardens

Before there were Televisions, this annual festivity was broadcasted on local radio stations in New York City. 1948 is the year the first televised Thanksgiving Day Parade was televised. Over time, it's become known as the "Macy's Day Parade."



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