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### **FACTS ABOUT ESTES PARK'S HOLIDAY SEASON**

**Tradition:** Estes Park always has treasured families. Holiday activities here are planned so people of all ages will enjoy the outing.

**The Lights:** At one time, no holiday lights in Estes Park were turned on until the official lighting at dusk the day after Thanksgiving, a tradition that began in the early '50s. The ceremony featured a small contingent of locals and high school band members who gathered around a spruce tree in Bond Park (the park in the center of downtown) to play and sing Christmas carols.

In 1951, the town's light and power department first created re-bar Christmas trees and attached them to poles throughout the area. The design plans have been shared with communities across the United States and our village now has 120 "trees" in the collection.

Along Elkhorn Avenue (the town's main street) trees now wear thousands of white twinkle lights, creating a storybook look after dark. In all, there are 175 decorated trees downtown. Merchants carry out the theme in their storefront windows.

**The Murals:** Between 1957 and 1966 Buell Porter designed and constructed the billboard murals seen around town. All are individually lit and provide a special addition to the ambience of the holiday season here. Six of them were refurbished between 1988 and 1993 by local artists.

**Santa Claus** (constructed in 1957 and reconstructed in 2005) was the first mural designed by Porter. With Rudolph leading the sleigh, Santa appears to fly over Estes Park from the green space known as "The Knoll" just north of Town Hall. The display stretches 80 feet.

## Facts about Estes Park's Holiday Season

**The Nativity Scene** (resorted in 1989) is at the corner of Virginia Drive and Elkhorn Avenue in Bond Par. It was Porter's second mural and originally was constructed and painted in 1958.

**The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe** is the first display seen when entering town on U.S. Highway 36 (from Boulder and Denver) and was added to the collection in 1965.

**The Three Wise Men** on the hill above the Riverwalk (south of Elkhorn Avenue) are nearly 20 feet tall. Shepherds, part of the scene above the Riverwalk, features sheep that are six feet tall. Years ago, local high school students protested that the herd wasn't politically correct and made frequent attempts to make certain at least one of them was a black sheep. The town eventually helped the youngsters out by officially painting at least one of the lambs black.

**Christmas in Bugville** (restored in 1990) now is in Bond Park, at the corner of MacGregor and Elkhorn Avenues.

**Santa's Card Shop** (restored in 1988) is on Elkhorn Avenue in front of the Public Library.

**The Holy Figure** overlooking the West end of Elkhorn Avenue provides a special religious message for the holiday season. It was constructed in 1966.

**The Parade** The lighted, evening parade was started in the late 1980s so the town could share its Christmas magic with others. The first three years, the parade was billed as "Santa's Storybook Parade" and featured walking characters and a few floats depicting storybook themes with Santa Claus. Later, the theme of the parade swelled as the floats became Disney-like: large, lighted floats and units. Floats are constructed by a team of volunteers beginning months before the parade. Some are more than 40 feet long, 12 feet high with more than 6,000 lights.

Community participation is widespread with school children of all ages riding the floats, carrying banners and portraying costumed characters. Parade attendance has grown steadily over the years, with last year's estimate placed at nearly 25,000.