



DONATE

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

What Christmas In LA Looks Like Across Space And Time

By [Lisa Brenner](#)

Published Dec 25, 2018 6:01 AM

Stories like these are only possible with your help!

You have the power to keep local news strong for the coming months. Your financial support today keeps our reporters ready to meet the needs of our city. Thank you for investing in your community.

Monthly Donation

One-Time Donation

\$5/mo

\$10/mo

\$15/mo

\$20/mo

\$ other amount /month

CONTINUE >

START YOUR DAY WITH LAIST

Sign up for How To LA, delivered weekday mornings.

SUBSCRIBE

You might be busy ripping apart goodies under the tree today, but we're busy ripping open the space-time continuum.

Please join us now for a photo journey through the ages.

From Long Beach in the 1920s to Hollywood Boulevard in the early aughts, here's how Los Angeles dresses up for this wintry (but warm) holiday.

1940s - DTLA



1940s: Holiday Candy Cane Streetcar Type H4 (Photo by Metro Library and Archive/Flickr CC)

1920 - LONG BEACH



1920: Santa Clause in an abbreviated costume holds presents as a group of bathers play "ring around the Christmas tree" on a beach in Long Beach. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1940 - HANCOCK PARK

1940: Looking north across Wilshire Boulevard at the entrance to Santa's Circus, one of the activities offered at the Christmas Show held to benefit the British War Relief Association of Southern California. 5843 Wilshire Boulevard in Hancock Park. The Christmas Show included a fully decorated snowman's cave, a staging area for Christmas plays, a gingerbread house, a magic castle, performing animals, Santa's castle, a fairyland, and a variety of amusement rides. The sign on the left side of the entrance gate reads, "Santa's Circus with Winston's Seals, Ernestine Clark Riding Act, Uncle Bill's Dog & Pony Show, Velarde Wire Walker Clowns. (Photo by Ansel Adams via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

2012 - SEAL BEACH

December 21, 2012: Surfing Santa, Michael Pless, 62, gives a 'hang-ten' gesture while riding a wave off Seal Beach, south of Los Angeles. Pless, who also runs a surfing school, has been dressing up as Santa Claus and taking to the waves in costume since the 1990's, sometimes joined by his wife Jill in a Mrs. Claus outfit. (Frederic J. Brown/AFP/Getty Images)

1931 - BEVERLY HILLS

December 21, 1931: Even a humble Beverly Hills cactus plant blazes forth vari-colored Christmas lights as more than 50 cities of Southern California observe the established

custom of outdoor Yuletide observance. Thousands of living trees are kept lighted during the period from Dec. 19 to Jan. 2. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1935 - HUNTINGTON BEACH

1935: Christmas lights and decorations hang at the corner of Main and Pacific Coast Highway (Ocean), in Huntington Beach. View is looking west. A large Christmas tree is on the left. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1937 - LOS FELIZ

1937: Vermont Avenue is decorated for Christmas in this view looking north from Prospect. (Photo by Herman Schultheis via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1950 - HOLLYWOOD

1950: Hollywood Boulevard decorated for Christmas. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

2001 - HOLLYWOOD

December 4, 2001: Christmas lights over Hollywood Blvd. blend with the lights of cars and neons signs. (David McNew/Getty Images)

1962 - SUNLAND-TUJUNGA

December 17, 1962: Sunland-Tujunga, East from Foothill Blvd. Legible signs include Meats-Deli-Fish-Poultry, cocktails, Pet Shop, saddlery, Richfield, Trailer Park, Rooms-Apartments, Florist, Mutual Savings, and another florist. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1978 - BEVERLY HILLS

1978: Exterior of the Beverly Hills Brown Derby, located at 9537 Wilshire Boulevard at Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Christmas decorations adorn the street light directly near the restaurant's entrance, and the Aida Grey Institut de Beaute´ (far left) and another storefront (left of center) are also present. After the building was occupied by the third Brown Derby from 1931 to 1982, it was demolished and replaced with a new commercial structure designed for high-end retail. (Photo by Anne Laskey via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

2000 - BEVERLY HILLS

December 10, 2000: Christmas lights adorn Rodeo Drive. (David McNew/Getty Images)

1962 - CANOGA PARK

December 22, 1962: Canoga Park: lights sparkle along Sherman Way business district. Visible signs include Hardware, Style Shop, 5 and 10, Jewelers, Green Thumb Hardware Garden Center, United California Bank, Pharmacy, Safeway, Bank of America. (Photo by George Brich via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1959 - PANORAMA CITY

January 2, 1959: A great Santa Claus standing 18 feet high with a girth 12 feet wide continues to stop traffic in front of the home of Leroy McFarlen, Lockheed tool designer of 8642 Costello Ave., Panorama City. Huge Santa almost dwarfs house and awes young and old. McFarlen fashioned tumbleweeds around a wooden frame to keep the Santa upright. Only problem says McFarlen is getting him down and to the refuse yard after today. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1948 - DTLA

December 22, 1948: The biggest Merry Christmas of them all is the claim made by the General Petroleum Corporation for the greeting on top of its new Los Angeles home. On a sign structure 30 feet high and 198 feet long - almost an entire city block - 10-foot high letters in green spell out "Merry Christmas". The Flying Red Horse, General Petroleum's trademark, measures 20 by 30 feet. The top of the greeting is 180 feet in the air - 30 feet above the 13-story building into which the company will move upon its completion early in 1949. Two additional greetings are painted on the sides of the superstructure. Each measures 30 by 95 feet. The signs were finished on December 16 and will remain up until December 27. It is estimated 1,025,000 people will read the greeting on the largest sign alone during that period. The signs will be lighted from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. and from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. A special highly leaded paint impregnated with castor oil was used to facilitate removal so a permanent sign can be installed after the holiday season. (Photo by Art Streib via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1940 - DTLA

1940: The intersection of Grand Avenue and Seventh Street, which has been decorated for the Christmas season. Pedestrians, autos and street cars fill up Seventh Street, one of the most prominent streets in downtown. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1937 - MIRACLE MILE

1937: A team of reindeer pulls a loaded sleigh across the sky in this night view of Wilshire Boulevard looking east at Burnside. A neon sign for the Bank of America is visible as well as the El Rey Theater on the far left, and the Wilshire Tower on the right. (Photo by Herman Schultheis via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

2001 - BEVERLY HILLS

December 21, 2011: Traffic flows along Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills beneath suspended lifesize figures of Santa Claus delivering toys from in his sleigh being pulled by reindeer. (Frederic J. Brown/AFP/Getty Images)

1985 - EAST L.A.

December 8, 1985: As snow clouds gathered over the Rockies and Los Angeles temperatures huddled in the low 60s, more than 50,000 East Siders nonetheless managed a warm overture for Santa Claus in the December 8, 1985 annual East Los Angeles Christmas Parade. This float from Stevens' Steak House cameos a couple of Santa's reindeer. Also in the march down Whittier Blvd. from Eastern Ave. to Westside Dr. were Hollywood celebrities, elected officials, and a host of high school bands and drill teams. Sheriff Sherman Block, Assemblywoman Gloria Molina and Assemblyman Richard Alatorre rode in a procession of 30 automobiles. Daniel Villanueva, president and manager of TV station KMEX, served as grand marshal. He was singled out because of his success in organizing KMEX's recent telethons to benefit victims of the Mexican earthquake and the volcanic eruption in Colombia. (Photo by Mike Sergieff via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1998 - BOYLE HEIGHTS

1998: Christmas decorations at a dwelling located at 2526 Boulder Street and Folsom, in the Boyle Heights neighborhood. (Photo by Virgil Mirano via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1925 - DTLA

1925: A huge Christmas tree, complete with garland and hanging ornaments, has been somehow installed on top of a telephone pole in front of Washington Furniture Co., located on Hill St. and Washington Blvd. Two workmen can be seen sitting on a type of hanging platform beneath the tree, but very high up on the pole. Instead of a treetop star, an American flag has been given the honors and waves majestically in the air. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1987 - CYPRESS PARK

1987: Tony, age 4, dressed as Santa for Christmas Day, at home in Cypress Park. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1966 - WATTS

1966: Joe Spaulding, Santa Monica mortician, on horseback at the 1966 Watts Christmas parade. (Photo by Rolland J. Curtis via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1930 - HOLLYWOOD

1930: Robertson Company building on the corner of Hollywood Blvd and Highland Ave, with a gentleman leaning against the building. A Christmas tree decoration can be seen on one of the light standards in the forefront, and an unidentified Art Deco structure is visible in the background. Robertson Company's motto is: "Hollywood's Dependable Department Store", offering stylish merchandise such as apparel for women, children and infants; men's furnishings; silks; patterns; domestics; and objects of art. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1982 - EAST L.A.

1982: A precision motorcycle team leads off the annual East Los Angeles Christmas Parade down Whittier Blvd. on November 28, 1982. The cross street is Ferris Ave. (Photo by Paul Chinn via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1962 - VAN NUYS

December 17, 1962: Van Nuys offers lots of angels. Visible signs include Pep Boys, Shoe repair, Zenith, Dr. Scholl's, TV, Coffee Shop, Shop E-Z Mattress, Surplus, Credit Dentist - Dr. Rossin (?), Drugs, a Schlitz billboard, another Credit Dentist (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1982 - BULLOCK'S

December 14, 1982: Bullock's Wilshire takes on Christmas season quite beautifully: with lights reflecting off polished marble and display cases brimming with goods, it is unmistakably a holiday and architectural environment. (Photo by Anne Knudsen via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1958 - RESEDA

December 26, 1958: This Santa Claus in the front lawn of Jasper L. Jones residence, 18624 Calvert Ave., Reseda, travels by flying saucer. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1959 - VAN NUYS

December 19, 1959: Santa Claus has already arrived at home of Harry A. Lowry, 1464-B Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys, but he didn't use his sleigh to make annual trip this year, as above photo plainly shows. To make sure he won't be late starting on Christmas Eve rounds, Santa stays straddled on rocket, awaiting wave-off from rocket-maker Lowry, standing at left. Lowry built 23-foot long rocket from cardboard tubing used in highway bridge construction. Project took him three weekends. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1930 - HOLLYWOOD

November 29, 1930: Looking west down Hollywood Boulevard from just east of Cahuenga Boulevard (center). Various businesses, including the Hollywood Pacific Theatre (center) and the Security-First National Bank (right, in what is known as the Security Trust & Savings Bank Building), are visible. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1937 - CLIFTON'S

1937: Clifton's Brookdale at Christmas. Crowds shopping on Broadway at Christmas walk past Clifton's Brookdale, which has been decorated for Christmas with a large tree on top

of the entry and fake snow sprinkled on the Brookdale letters. Signs on the facade call this cafeteria the "worlds largest" and indicate that it is open "6 am to midnight" The first and second floor facades are open with diners visible past decorative wooden pieces. A Salvation Army bell ringer has set up in front of the restaurant. (Photo by Herman Schultheis via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1937 - DTLA

1937: Broadway and 6th at Christmas. The sidewalk is packed with crowds shopping on Broadway at Christmas. A wreath is mounted on the light pole. The Art Deco neon sign for Sweldom is seen on the right and the Owl and Drug across the street is located on the ground floor of the Norton Building. (Photo by Herman Schultheis via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1937 - DTLA

1937: Crowds pack the sidewalks in this Christmas time view of Broadway and Seventh. The building on the left is the United Building and Bullock's is on the right. (Photo by Herman Schultheis via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1962 - SHERMAN OAKS

December 17, 1962: Sherman Oaks, west on Ventura at Van Nuys. Visible signs include Free Parking 4 Doors West, Tailors, Custom Furniture, Cleaners, Clark Jewelers, Repair, Bakery, Sherman Oaks Savings and Loan, Hiskoff's, tailor, dept store, Mark's Valley Drugs, market, liquor. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1956 - PANORAMA CITY

November 24, 1956: Santa Claus and Rudolph, red-nosed reindeer, take time out from duties at Santa's Village in Panorama City to visit ward at Childrens Hospital in Los Angeles. N. S. Ridgeway Jr. representing Panorama City merchants, chats with little girl patient. Santa and his herd of reindeer may be seen daily near Van Nuys boulevard and Chase street. (Photo via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

1962 - VAN NUYS

November 24, 1962: Angel caught napping in Van Nuys - This reclining, yellow-haired angel was one of 54 such statues strewn along Van Nuys Blvd. from Vanowen to Bessemer St. this week as merchants began to decorate the boulevard for the holiday season. The 13-foot-high statues, designed by Earl Hoagland, will stand on the sidewalk beneath colored lights and garlands affixed to light standards." Signs visible in the picture include the Van Nuys Army & Navy Surplus Store, and an Upholstery Supplies store. (Photo by Gordon Dean via Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

And to all a good night.

You made it! Congrats, you read the entire story, you gorgeous human. This story was made possible by generous people like you. Independent, local journalism costs \$\$\$\$\$. And now that LAist is part of KPCC, we rely on that support. So if you aren't already, be one of us! Help us help you live your best life in Southern California. [Donate now.](#)



LAist is part of Southern California Public Radio (SCPR), a member-supported public media network. Hear our news on-air at our partner site:

KPCC | 89.3FM

[Live Stream](#) [Schedule](#) [In Person](#)

[About Us](#)

[LAist Staff](#)

[Careers](#)

[Advertising](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Support Us](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Editorial Ethics & Guidelines](#)

[DEI Statement](#)

[Style Guide](#)

[Diversity Report](#)

Keep up with LAist

Our top stories delivered weeknights

Email



SUBSCRIBE

© 2022 Southern California Public Radio - All Rights Reserved

[Terms of Service](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

