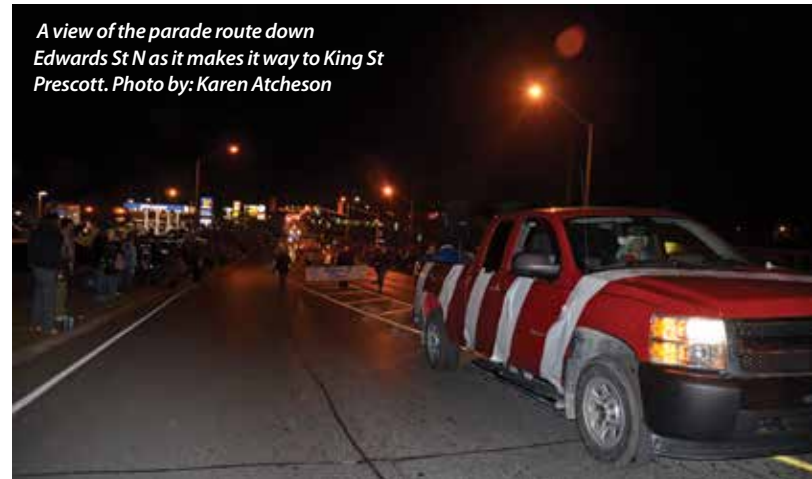




Bill Countryman former member of Prescott Fire Department standing beside vintage 1931 Bickle Fire Truck. Photo by Prescott Fire Department



A view of the parade route down Edwards St N as it makes it way to King St Prescott. Photo by: Karen Atcheson

# PRE-CHRISTMAS TRADITION

## Prescott's Annual "Light up the Night Parade"

By: Joan Rupert-Barkley

When the popular Santa Claus parade takes place in Prescott, hundreds of spectators from all over gather along the parade route to watch this iconic event. Area restaurants are booked solid before the parade. Smaller children, dressed in warm hats, mittens and scarfs, are perched on top of parent's shoulders hoping to get a better glimpse of Santa, while other parents hope to get a glimpse of their child riding on one of the many floats.

Although this year will be the 64th edition of the parade, it has only been a nighttime event for the last 17 years. However, it is tradition to hold the parade on the third Friday in November. John Henry and Chris Veltkamp are co-chairs of this year's parade.

"Our spectators provide lots of great feedback each year and the nighttime event seems to be a lot of fun. Everyone enjoys seeing the bright lights on the floats and our downtown lit up," said John Henry.

Henry estimated there are hundreds of lights on each float.

Members of the Prescott Fire Department help plan and execute the Annual Light Up the Night Parade and also enjoy walking, or driving the parade route the night of the parade.

"No matter what time of day the parade occurs, safety is always a priority." Henry indicated, "they work closely with key partners, such as the Town of Prescott Operations staff and the local detachment of the OPP to ensure there are proper road closures, barricades, and crowd control."

According to Henry, there were more than 100 entries in the parade in 2016. Some of the entries included bands from such places as Arnprior, Brockville, Kemptville, Ottawa and Smith Falls. These bands included traditional marching bands, pipe and drum bands, as well as steel drum bands. Neighbouring Fire Departments from Augusta, Edwardsburgh/Cardinal, Morristown and other Fire Departments from across Eastern Ontario and Northern New York participate in the parade as well. Prescott's mayor, other area mayors, local MPP and MP are just some of the dignitaries to participate in the parade.

With so many entries, it is a huge undertaking to get everything organized the night of the parade. According to Henry, everyone that is part of the parade meets at South Grenville District High School at 6 P.M. The lineup varies slightly from year to year and is based on several factors.

"We have a few reserved locations to lead the parade; Legion Colour Party and Pipe Band, our antique fire truck, the South Grenville District High School "Spirit of Giving, but the real art is balancing everything out. From larger to smaller entries, those with and without music, motorized and walking floats and the bands. Let's not forget Santa; he gets a special place at the end of the line," commented Henry.

There are other activities that occur the night of the parade. The Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 97, puts on a spaghetti dinner. There is also caroling at the clock tower. There are first, second and third prizes awarded to floats with the judges being residents from the area. There is also a special award dedicated to fire apparatus.

Organizations that want to be a part of this year's parade should arrive at SGDHS at 6 P.M. on Friday, November 17. There is no pre-registration needed. This year's theme is Canada 150.

"My favourite part of the parade is walking the route and seeing the community support. The streets are packed with excited kids and families. The town always looks so beautiful. It feels like it is the kick off to the Christmas season and the energy is high," commented Henry. **LH**