

Rockefeller Center tree dates back to 1930s

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

The first Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center was erected in 1931, two years before the opening of Rockefeller Plaza, where the tree now draws thousands of tourists each year.

The tradition began when construction workers hard at work on building Rockefeller Center decorated a roughly 20-foot-tall balsam fir tree on Christmas Eve in 1931. Strings of cranberries and tin cans were among the items used to decorate the tree.

While there was no tree in 1932, the first official tree was unveiled in 1933 in Rockefeller Plaza, and the lighting ceremony was broadcast over NBC Radio. The 1933 tree, at 50 feet tall, dwarfed the 1931 tree. However, the 1933 tree paled in comparison to the 10-ton Norway Spruce erected in 1999, which measured 100 feet tall and remains the tallest tree ever erected at Rockefeller Center.

The tradition of the Rockefeller Center tree continues to evolve to this day, but the evergreen is no longer lit with incandescent light bulbs. LED bulbs that consume a fraction of the energy of traditional bulbs are the bulbs of choice now. In addition, in 2007 Rockefeller Center partnered with Habitat for Humanity, who used the tree after it was taken down to furnish lumber for home construction.

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