



November / December 2022

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree...

Residents of Hales Corners can always tell that Christmas is fast approaching when they see a white trailer appear on the east side of Highway 100 just south of Grange Avenue. That 1960s trailer belongs to the Hales Corners Lions Club, and has been the “mission control headquarters” of their annual Christmas tree lot for more than 20 years.

The Hales Corners Lions Club was founded in 1956. In the 1960s, the club began to sell Christmas trees from a lot located behind Sherper’s Discount Center, which at the time was based at the corner of Highway 100 and Janesville Road (where Walgreens is now). According to Lions Club member **Carl Rynders**, the lot was enclosed by a snow fence, Christmas music was played from a reel-to-reel tape recorder, and 500 trees were usually in stock. Carl’s dad, **Merlin**, was a club member, so then-10-year-old Carl was put to work at the lot. During lulls in sales, he improved his pitching arm by throwing snowballs at passing cars on Highway 100.

In the 1960s, people generally waited until a week or so before Christmas before purchasing a Christmas tree. Today, people often begin decorating for Christmas shortly after Halloween, so the day after Thanksgiving becomes their target date for buying a tree. Lions Club tree sales begin promptly at noon on the Friday after Thanksgiving and continue until there are only 10 to 12 trees left, or until December 10th, whichever comes first.

HCHS member **Jim Bain** joined the Hales Corners Lions Club in 1996 and volunteered to work at the Christmas tree lot that year. He must have been a very good volunteer because, in 2009, he began ordering the trees and managing the lot.



If you’re dreaming of a white trailer, just like the one you used to know... it’s on Hwy. 100 near Grange Ave.



Inside the trailer: headquarters of the Lions Club Christmas Tree Lot

The current tree lot is located in a parking lot that has been the property of RE/Max 100 Realty for many years. That firm has always granted permission for the Lions Club to use that space for their annual tree sales. Now that RE/Max is gone, permission to use that space next year will need to be arranged.

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LIONS CLUB TREE LOT *continued from page 1*

The Lions Club has purchased trees from various providers through the years. In 2015, the club checked prices and quantities at a number of Wisconsin tree farms, and selected Central Wisconsin Evergreens, a grower in Merrill, Wisconsin, to be their new provider. They provide higher-quality trees by prime cutting and shearing them before delivery.

These days, the Lions lot offers Balsams and Fraser Firs. Years ago, they also sold Scotch Pines, but demand for those trees dropped off because they generally have crooked trunks. Jim Bain recalled how Scotch Pines often were flocked in white or pastel colors and decorated with one-color ornaments.

According to Carl and Jim, most people shop for a tree between 7 and 10 feet in height, but occasionally someone wants a 12-to-14-foot-tall tree. The Lions lot usually stocks 2 or 3 trees in those sizes and will take orders in advance to meet specific needs. In addition, the lot usually has a couple of "Charlie Brown" trees on hand for fans of that Christmas show. If they are not purchased, they are donated to St. Mary Catholic Faith Community, where they are cut up to provide branches for decoration.

The prices on trees has more than doubled since the early days. Since last year, prices have risen about \$5 each, based on categories and height. Balsams range from 6 to 12 feet tall, sell for \$45-\$100, and can last through early January. Frasers, which are the most popular trees, range from 6 to 10 feet tall, sell for \$50-\$75, and can last until Valentine's Day because they have twice the amount of needles as a Balsam.

The Lions Club lot also sells other Christmas decorations. In 2020, it began offering "Christmas Gnomes" made by club members and other volunteers. Christmas wreaths sold on the Lions lot have been purchased from Boy Scout Troop 598 since 2009. They range from 26 to 40 inches and sell for \$25-\$45. The Lions Club and Troop 598 have been working together for years; the Scouts help set up the tree lot and are also involved in

other Lions Club events such as the Easter Egg Hunt and the Pumpkin Fest. Incidentally, this is the same troop that raised funds for the preservation of the Ben Hunt Cabin and helped with its cleanup in 1986.

Because of its reputation for quality trees, the Lions Club lot is patronized by many repeat customers. Last year, \$700 in donations was added to tree sales receipts because customers realize that the Lions Club uses those proceeds for many charitable causes. Through their own district and the Wisconsin Lions Foundation, they provide funding for Hear Wisconsin, Vision Forward Association, Kathy's House (Froedtert Hospital grounds), Wisconsin Lions Camp, and Wisconsin Diabetes Awareness, among others. In addition, the Lions provide funding for families in need as well as for a variety of Village events.

So, if you're in the market for a real live tree this Christmas season, you now know of a tree lot that's close by. Unlike most lots, tree sales here benefit our community. The Hales Corners Lions Club tree lot has been an important part of Village history for almost six decades, and with your help, it could last another six decades.

HALES CORNERS LIONS CLUB
Working hand in hand With Boy Scout Troop 598

Christmas Tree Center
16th ANNUAL

Over \$25,000
Given to Charity

Contributions—Summary to date

- Whitnall High School Band
- Family Aid
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Hales Corners Auxiliary Police
- Community Flag Pole
- Help to the Sight Handicapped
- Home for the Blind

Just Behind Sherpers
HWY 100 AND JANESVILLE ROAD

Here again with great trees and
the men to help your selection.

**THE LIONS
ARE ALSO SELLING
WREATHS
FOR THE
BOY SCOUTS**

Hales Corners Lions Club ad from 1974

Village Christmas Tree Lighting on December 3rd



The annual Village Christmas Tree Lighting will take place at the Hales Corners Library on December 3rd. Also that night, the Ben Hunt Cabin will be open from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

REMINDER:

Groups are welcome to schedule special tours of the Ben Hunt Cabin or to hold meetings there. There is no charge, but donations are appreciated. The Cabin reservation form is available on the HCHS website (www.halescornershistory.com) or by email at: celine.elizabeth@sbcglobal.net



TALES OF THE CORNERS - NOVEMBER

From the files of the *Tri-Town News and Hub*

90 YEARS AGO (1932)

- In Hales Corners balloting for U.S. President, there are 323 votes for Franklin Roosevelt, 82 for Herbert Hoover, 50 for Socialist Norman Thomas, and 1 for the Communist Party candidate William Foster.
- Due to these "trying times," members of the Hales Corners Freede-Eckel American Legion Post decide to accept I.O.U.s, farm produce, or labor in lieu of membership dues.
- The county announces plans to widen Hwy. 100 in Hales Corners to 30 feet. The project is scheduled for next summer.
- Teachers at Hales Corners School are Mrs. Robert Lynch, Mrs. Harvey Behling, Helen Kyburz, and Frank Nelson, principal.

80 YEARS AGO (1942)

- On the honor roll erected at the Dreyfuss corners, 50 Hales Corners servicemen are listed.
- The Gloria-Lyn Beauty Salon's anniversary special is an oil permanent for \$4.50.

70 YEARS AGO (1952)

- In the U.S. Presidential election, Hales Corners residents favor Dwight Eisenhower over Adlai Stevenson, 607 votes to 225.
- A notice of the circulation of a petition for annexation of about 40 acres of land to Hales Corners is published. If completed, the annexation would place Grange Ave. between Forest Home Ave. and 108th St. in the Village. Currently, it is part of Greenfield.
- Budget figures show that Hales Corners has operated with a total expenditure of \$9,426 since its incorporation on January 31, 1952. Another \$613 will be spent before the end of the year. Since the Village was not able to collect taxes, it owes \$4,233 for unpaid salaries to Village officers and clerical help.
- Whitnall Park Lutheran Church holds a hobo dinner.

60 YEARS AGO (1962)

- Village Police Chief Michael Wolke is elected Milwaukee County Sheriff.
- The Hales Corners National Tea Food Store advertises a 6.5 oz can of tuna for 29 cents, 4 rolls of bathroom tissue for 34 cents, and cauliflower for 29 cents per head.
- The Hales Corners theater group estimates that 1,000 people attended its production of *Harvey*.

50 YEARS AGO (1972)

- Hales Corners voters favor Richard Nixon over George McGovern for President, 2,294 to 1,196.
- A recount shows State Rep. James Rutkowski will retain his seat in the 82nd Assembly District. Rutkowski beat Homer Hanson by 32 votes.
- There are 4,150 registered voters in Hales Corners (compared with 4,859 today).

40 YEARS AGO (1982)

- In addition to books, the Library is now circulating sewing patterns.

Research by Katy Galewski

Watch for Your HCHS Membership Renewal Letter

Our membership renewal letter will be mailed to all members in December. We hope you will continue to support our efforts to preserve the history of the Village and attend all four of our FREE historical programs in 2023.

Come Visit Our Annual Christmas Window Display at the Library

Our annual Christmas window display will be installed at the Hales Corners Library during the last week of November and will remain up until January. The theme of this year's window is "Christmas Houses in the Village."

In early December 2003-2007, HCHS organized Christmas open houses in the Village, all beautifully decorated for the season. They featured live entertainment, complimentary refreshments and raffle items. In 2008, the Friends of the Hales Corners Park and Pool joined in the event, and then continued on their own until 2012.

HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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www.facebook.com/HalesCornersHistory

TALES OF THE CORNERS - DECEMBER

From the files of the *Tri-Town News and Hub*

90 YEARS AGO (1932)

- A survey form is printed on the front page of the *Tri-Town News*. The Hales Corners Advancement Association wants to know if residents would like to change the name of the Village.
- The Hales Corners football team finishes fourth in the Root Creek Valley League, after being defeated on Thanksgiving Day by the Layton Park Trojans.
- About 50 members of the Freede-Eckel American Legion Post and their friends enjoy a venison dinner at Herman Nacker's home.
- Milton Nitz and his orchestra start a series of modern dances on Saturday nights at Fairview Gardens (the Bosch Tavern). Admission is 15 cents for gentlemen and 10 cents for ladies.
- R.W. Holz announces that his dealership is introducing the new 1933 line of Chevrolets this week.
- Henry Schubring announces that he is opening a feed store in the former barber shop at the rear of his building.

80 YEARS AGO (1942)

- Gasoline rationing begins and a longer line of cars can be found parked near the interurban depot.
- Hales Corners air raid wardens are needed. About 14 women are already enrolled.
- The second week of gas rationing is having an effect on the *Tri-Town News*. Because people are cutting back on their driving, there are fewer social items in the newspaper than usual.
- Christmas trees and yule logs are for sale at Mayer's Barber Shop.
- Emanuel Evangelical Church's young adult group sends gifts to members of the congregation who are in the service.

70 YEARS AGO (1952)

- William Holz, Hales Corners clerk, announces that property tax bills can be picked up at the State Bank Hales Corners. They will not be mailed.
- Mrs. Fred Marquardt chooses "For a Christmas to Remember" as the theme for the Milwaukee District Garden Show. Members of the Whitnall Garden Club will be exhibiting and selling toys at the event.

60 YEARS AGO (1962)

- Santa arrives by helicopter at the Country Fair Shopping Center.
- The Rev. Francis Drabinowicz is assigned to St. Mary Catholic Church.
- The Hales Corners Auxiliary Police plan a Christmas party and farewell for Police Chief Michael Wolke who founded the organization. He has been elected Milwaukee County Sheriff.

50 YEARS AGO (1972)

- Santa appears in the annual Hales Corners Christmas parade.
- Children of Whitnall Park Lutheran Church collect Christmas gifts for the children at the Milwaukee County Children's Home.
- Members of the Hales Corners Chamber of Commerce meet with Village President Howard Graves to discuss their project, "Boulevard 108." The main thrust of the project is to eliminate the electric company's towers and beautify about one mile of 108th St. between Janesville Rd. and Edgerton Ave.
- Doris Schmidt is appointed deputy clerk in charge of Village elections.

Research by Katy Galewski