



## A Keokuk Christmas

Take me back to yesterday, With Keokuk all lit up that way  
Main Street welcomed with "Noel", Salvation Army's ringing bells  
Each intersection we passed by, Had Christmas trees that touched the sky  
Lamp posts decked out in their finest, All the cars lined up behind us  
In the middle, piles of snow, A wonderland at four-below  
Too slick bridge, ice on the river, Frozen over, it made us shiver  
Prayed we didn't meet a truck, Just part of Winter's Keokuk  
Holiday shopping on Main Street, Store to store 'til we were beat  
Kresge's, Penney's, P N Hirsh, H L Green; the old Woolworth's  
Montgomery Ward and Betty Gay, Filled our dreams of Christmas day.

If we were good, we'd eat lunch out, Chose Chuck Wagon; not a doubt  
I always ordered the "wet bread", (Most would say "hot beef" instead)  
The annual Santa Claus parade, Firetruck as Santa's sleigh  
Excitement seemed to take its toll, "Don't be naughty; you'll get coal!"  
Next, we'd pass the Tree of Lights, Each glowing bulb changed someone's life  
That little house to meet St. Nick, Ho Ho Ho and candy sticks  
Children's laughter; wanting toys, "Have you been good girls and boys?"  
Band boosters came; delivered fruit, Those oranges part of stocking loot  
The pond in Rand Park, all ice skating, Christmas cheer and celebrating  
Hot chocolate warmed us up inside, Chief Keokuk looked on with pride.

Picking out a Christmas tree, From the woods where they were free  
Or buy one by the root beer stand, Every size and shape on hand  
Big family meals with relatives, Close to where most people lived  
Not spread out and losing touch, Back when Christmas meant so much  
The stores were closed; our hearts were open, Love shared by all with no words spoken  
Dinners at the labor hall, Santa came with gifts for all  
Neighbors waved and shared delights, Hushed evenings whispered "Silent Night"  
Cold and crisp and stars above, A whole town wrapped inside Christ's love  
Went to church in shiny shoes, St. Mary's was the one we'd choose  
Could hear church bells from far away, Happy for the holidays

Christmastime meant caroling, Adults told us, "Make sure you sing!"  
Called, "Merry Christmas! How you been?", "It's good to have you home again!"  
Driving around to look at lights, Those big old bulbs that shined so bright  
Nativities and candy canes, Filled the streets and lit each lane  
Grand Avenue out to West K, Keokuk shined for Christmas day  
The best big hills for going sledding, "Watch for cars!" and us forgetting  
Flying saucers and toboggans, Flipped ourselves and hit our noggins  
Front yard, 8th Street; in the park, Played outside 'til it was dark

Came in for supper; sore to toes All cherry cheeked and runny nosed.  
Slept so good the whole night through, Went back again the next day too  
School programs; kids dressed to the nines, Practiced songs a thousand times  
I remember walking up those risers, Spirits couldn't get much higher  
My solo about Christmas morn, "I am the sheep with curly horns"  
Remember Dad would tease me so, "They can't hear it if you sing so low"  
I miss him now that he is gone, Those Christmas memories linger on...  
When Christmas makes us feel alone, It helps to let our minds go home  
Back to the place our Christmas started, Where friends were real and most kindhearted  
I adore that small-town Christmas scene, Where life was pure and evergreen  
When people had good will toward men, And the New Year brought us hope again  
The joy of the season never missed us...I always loved a Keokuk Christmas!

~Linda Slayton, December 21, 2016

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year  
from the City of Keokuk**