

The history of holiday lights

Holiday celebrants employ holiday lights in various ways. Certain individuals may be content to hang lights on their Christmas trees and call their decorating complete. Others may get their holiday jollies by making sure each square inch of their

home is covered in twinkling lights. Still, other people prefer the more subdued effect of lights framing one picture window of the house.

The tradition of Christmas lights stretches back to early modern Germany when people used candles

to decorate Christmas trees in Christian homes. Those candles were harbingers of what would come when electric lights replaced gas and other open flame illuminating devices that were commonplace prior to the 20th century.

Thomas Edison created the first strand of electric lights that would be used in holiday decorating. According to a 2003 article in American Heritage magazine titled "The Wizard of Your Christmas Tree," Edison strung incandescent bulbs all around the compound of laboratory. Since the laboratory was situated along a major

railroad, thousands of people were able to see the display.

The concept of electric holiday lights took some time to catch on. In 1903, when General Electric began to offer pre-assembled kits of holiday lights, stringed lights were reserved for the wealthy and electrically savvy. For example, in 1903 a single

string of electric lights cost \$12, or around \$300 today.

Today, illuminated strands of lights have become a large part of holiday celebrations and have even been adopted for use during various year-round events. Such lights can be a beautiful and festive addition to many celebrations.

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BRIGHT LIGHTS: A large crowd gather to watch Santa flip the switch to light up the Acton Sports field with the annual *Light Up The Hills* display. Santa and the crowd were entertained by the St. Joseph school choir and the Acton Citizen Band. When asked if he was enjoying the Christmas songs, Santa quipped "Very much so, half of them are about me. Ho Ho Ho". - Les Schmidt photos



David Burland

Sales Representative REALTOR®

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