

# Alton neighborhoods observe Epiphany holiday by burning Christmas trees

January 7 2016 10:40 AM



**ALTON** - In observance of the Epiphany holiday, fires ignite Christmas trees at both **Riverview Park** and **Haskell Park** in Alton.

The Epiphany is a feast day celebrated by Christians around the world. Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of God in his Son as human in Jesus Christ.

Here in Alton, two particular neighborhoods celebrated this mark in the calendar by burning their Christmas trees in a regulated manner, assisted by the Alton Police Department.

Jan. 6, the last day of the Christmas season, comes with its own traditions, rituals and

symbols. Carolers are going from house to house, in many homes the Christmas tree is taken down and in some areas is burnt in a big bonfire. For the children this is an especially joyous occasion because, associated with taking down the tree goes the "plündern" (raiding) of the tree. The sweets, chocolate ornaments wrapped in foil or cookies, which have replaced the sugar plums, are the raiders' rewards.

Tradition has it that family kept their yule log burning until this night, the 12th day after Christmas, marking the end of the Christmas season. The burning of the Christmas trees symbolizes the end of the holiday season.

Families from the parks' neighborhoods drug their trees from their living rooms to the burn pile to ignite the sky.

The burning of Christmas trees on this particular holiday is a long-standing tradition on Christian Hill, where River View Park is located. For over 60 years, residence from Christian Hill have burned their Christmas trees in in the sunken garden. Haskell Park also participated in the observance.

The turnout for the fire was light with attendees saying that the best turnouts happen when there is snow on the ground. Because of the unseasonable weather resulting in the vegetation around the Sunken Garden being dry, the Alton Fire Department sprayed the surrounding area with water prior to setting fire.

Once the fire was down to mostly embers, the AFD hosed down what remained of the trees and remained onsite until they were sure there was no chance of the fire reigniting.