



**A BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE
TEMPLE CITY CAMELLIA
FESTIVAL**
www.CamelliaFestival.org

It all started in 1944 with a contest held by the Women's Club of Temple City to choose a flower and a slogan for the community, and Mrs. Ralph Saunders submitted the winning slogan "*Temple City Home of Camellias.*"

In 1946, at the request of the Woman's Club, the Chamber of Commerce assumed the promotion of the slogan. All local youth groups, numbering approximately 150 members, formed a parade beginning at the theatre parking lot at Rosemead Boulevard and Las Tunas Drive and ending at Primrose and Las Tunas Drive. In 1947 the Chamber of Commerce decided that the festival should be put to better use by further promoting the growth of local youth groups. It was also decided that the Camellia Royalty should be chosen from local first graders with the idea that after having participated in the Camellia Parade they would all want to belong to one of the youth organizations. In 1948, Chairman Blaine Bender with his vision and good showmanship inspired the community to really make something of this event. A theme was chosen for the first time, "Jewels of Temple City", and youth groups were invited to enter miniature floats, which ranged from decorated doll buggies and bicycles, to plywood mounted on a coaster wagon; 23 floats turned up for the parade, also added was a carnival and coronation pageant. Monies derived from the event were used to establish a Temple City Youth Center. The Temple City Camellia Festival Committee continues to use profits from the event to support the youth of Temple City.

After those early years, the festival continued to grow in size and popularity. Youth groups improved on their float presentations and prizes were added, including a Sweepstakes Award. Big name entertainers were happy to act as Grand Marshal and narrate the parade down the boulevard. The festival gained national recognition, and in many newspapers and magazines Temple City became known for its interest in children and as a "Home Community."

It was in recognition of the significance of family life by its residents that the Camellia Festival was founded. Its purpose of encouraging every young person in the community to belong to a recognized youth organization and to participate in the affairs of their city is still its purpose.

With the Parade and Carnival having grown in size and significance, to the point where Temple City prepares yearly to welcome over 5,000 children to its parade and greet more than 20,000 visitors to the city. The Temple City Camellia Festival has become a 501(c) (4) Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation, Officially Sponsored by the City of Temple City. The Festival takes place the last full weekend in February. A Royal Court consisting of a King, Queen, two Princes, two Princesses, and four Banner Carriers is selected from first grade students in the Temple City Unified School District or who reside in the City of Temple City and a Coronation is held in early February attended by the public and local dignitaries.

Celebrating 77 years in 2021, you would be hard pressed to find a long-term Temple City resident who has not, at some point, walked in the Camellia Parade. Most will remember the youth group they walked with, the float they made, or the rides they enjoyed at the carnival. The Temple City Camellia Festival Committee endeavors to provide an event that focuses on the youth in our community.