



## **A FRENCH TRADITION IN OLD SAN FRANCISCO - THE CITY OF PARIS CHRISTMAS TREE**

Ever since 1909 when the City of Paris was rebuilt as a beautiful landmark on Union Square, following its destruction in the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, the store's Christmas tree turned into a command performance each year, a Holiday tradition never to be missed in San Francisco.

Each year, a special crew harvested a 35' Douglas fir in the forests along the Russian River. They sprayed it with fire retardant and wrapped it in burlap before transporting it to San Francisco. There, traffic on Geary was stopped while the tree was carried into the City of Paris, generally at 6:00pm on the Saturday evening that preceded Thanksgiving.

The tree was carefully unwrapped and hoisted "by block and tackle" to a seven-foot platform. Its top reached clear up to the rotunda's fourth floor. Next, another crew of workers surrounded it with catwalks so it could be decorated. It took twenty men the entire weekend to hang all the ornaments while crowds watched outside.

The tree was first crowned with a giant star, then adorned with 5000 glass balls, 818 yards of silver tinsel and 84 three-foot packages of silver rain. There were also drums, horns and other musical instruments, doll buggies, red wagons, sleds, snowmen, stars, snowballs, popcorn ropes and Santas set among its branches. There it stood, revolving on its platform, glistening with a thousand lights, for the delight of all, children and grownups alike, who soon nicknamed the *City of Paris* "The Christmas Tree Store."



*Do you have a City of Paris Christmas Tree story to share, your own memories of going to see it, or a relative's or a friend's? Let us know!*

**P.S. Dr. Chalmers posted these two postcards from her collection on *eBay* for those of you who might want to keep them as mementos. Just go to *eBay* and type in City of Paris Christmas Tree.**