

WHITE CHRISTMAS

"White Christmas" is an Irving Berlin song reminiscing about an old-fashioned Christmas setting. It was Bing Crosby best-selling single of all time, with estimated sales in excess of 50 million copies worldwide. All other versions of the song, along with Bing Crosby's have an estimated sales > 100 million copies.



1945 V-Disc release by the U.S. Army of "White Christmas"

"I'll Be Home for Christmas" by Bing Crosby

The first public performance of the song was by Bing Crosby, on his NBC radio show *The Kraft Music Hall* on Christmas Day, 1941.

By October 31, 1942, however, "White Christmas" topped the "Your Hit Parade" chart. It remained in that position until well into the New Year. It has been noted that the mix of melancholy — "just like the ones I used to know" — with comforting images of home — "where the treetops glisten" — resonated especially strongly during World War II.

Richmond has had 10 Christmases with measurable snowfall in the past 116 yrs.

2010	BECEMBER 25	-	2.7 inches of snow
1993	BECEMBER 25	-	0.1 inches of snow
1981	BECEMBER 25	-	1.1 inches of snow
1970	BECEMBER 25	-	0.2 inches of snow
1969	BECEMBER 25	-	1.8 inches of snow
1962	BECEMBER 25	-	4.3 inches of snow
1948	BECEMBER 25	-	0.6 inches of snow
1914	BECEMBER 25	-	5.4 inches of snow
1909	BECEMBER 25	-	1.8 inches of snow
1902	BECEMBER 25	-	1.1 inches of snow

4 other years had >3 inches of snow just before Christmas

1908	BECEMBER 22, 23	-	17.2 inches of snow
1935	BECEMBER 22, 23	-	4.7 inches of snow
1966	BECEMBER 23, 24	-	8.8 inches of snow
1967	BECEMBER 22, 23	-	5.4 inches of snow

White Christmas Turns Into Driver's Nightmare ¹⁹⁶⁹

"I'm dreaming of a white Christmas," crooned the stereo.

But in the Shenandoah Valley, a white Christmas was no dream. It was a living, brighter-than-bright reality.

It was only a dream for the youngsters who received sleds and skis, or the oldsters who could sit snugly by the fire and sip Christmas cheer.

But for the thousands who were forced to travel on Christmas day, it was more of a nightmare than a dream.

"You can hardly stand up out there, much less drive," lamented a State Trooper who had just pulled in from patrolling Interstate 81 in late afternoon.

Despite the hazardous roads, there were no serious traffic mishaps reported. There were only scattered reports of minor mishaps.

Police and traffic officials said that by 9 p.m., traffic was extremely light and moving slowly.

A glaze of ice which formed under the snow made driving extremely treacherous, reported the Staunton District Highway Office.

For the highway crews who had to rush through Christmas dinners — if they even had a chance to sit down at the table

and begin spreading chemicals and plowing snow, the storm was downright inconsiderate.

Probably the most cruel blow of all was to the Harrisonburg car washes, who left work Wednesday and the washes were not scheduled to return work Monday morning.

"Yeah, it sorta cut into that four-day weekend," one said with the resignation of a born loser.

In the Harrisonburg and Rockingham County area, the snow began with tiny flakes about 9:30 a.m. Thursday. These sputtered down intermittently until about 1:30 p.m.

Then it began to stick — and a short time later, to pile up.

The Weather Bureau forecast followed about the same pattern as the snow. First it was to be a two-inch accumulation. Then four.

But 7 p.m. the Weather Bur-

eau said the storm appeared stalled over western Virginia, and snow was expected to pile up from 8 to 12 inches.

By 8 p.m., the far southwest, which was hit first, was reporting accumulations of 11 inches.

Forest Fletcher of the Staunton District Highway Office said at 8 p.m., snow was deeper in the southern section of the district than in the northern. But it was colder in the northern area, and roads were more hazardous there because an underglaze of ice.

The district runs from Frederick and Clarke counties
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Christmas Day Snow First Since 1962

Thursday was the first white Christmas — from a Christmas Day snow — in the Valley since 1962, but indications late last night were the snow may become the deepest on a Dec. 25 this century.

Unofficial measurements at 10:30 p.m. placed Thursday's snow at 5 inches. "And it is really coming down," one observer added.

The 5 inches equalled the last previous Christmas Day snow and the 6-inch mark set in 1909 appeared seriously threatened.

The whitest white Christmas of the century was 1908, when 8

inches fell, Mr. Lowell Koontz, Naked Creek weather observer, reported Thursday night.

Although 1962 is considered the last legitimate white Christmas before Thursday, Mr. Koontz noted that a trace of snow fell Dec. 25, 1966.

Four inches of snow already was on the ground at Christmas in 1966.

Before Thursday, 19 inches of snow had been measured during calendar 1969 at the Dale Enterprise weather station, Rockingham County's official observation point.

The Christmas Day, 1962 snow brought that year's total to 58 inches. It had been boosted by a 30-inch accumulation in early March.

Richmond's Past White

By Carole Roper

Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

While this year's chances for snow appear so slim that Santa Claus is getting few requests for sleds, that hasn't always been true.

Richmond has had some memorable white Christmases filled with sledding, snowmen and snowball fights.

Some of the white Christmases, however, aren't considered the "real" kind, since no snow fell on Christmas Day. The snow on the ground actually was the remnants of previous days' snowfalls.

But others were true white Christmases — the kind that made dreams come true for children who hurriedly ate their holiday meals so they could run out and play in the snow.

THE LARGEST CHRISTMAS Day snowfall here occurred in 1914. The National Weather Service said 5.4 inches of snow fell.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch, on the following day, ran a front-page article about Richmond's Christmas Day snowfall. It was an article, though, overshadowed by stories about Christmas Day developments of World War I. Included was one account of an unsuccessful Dec. 25 raid on London by a German airplane.

The Christmas Day snow, the newspaper story said, "began falling shortly after 4 o'clock yesterday morning — a heavy flaky snow that small boys love because it 'packs.' By 8 o'clock in the morning it lay two inches thick. Two hours later, when sleepy Christmas

Eve revelers yawned and wondered if it was too late for church, the white carpet had attained a thickness of four inches. Snow fell without stop all day, covering the city with a blanket eight or ten inches in depth."

(The 5.4 inches was recorded by the National Weather Service at its office then in Chimborazo Park. Snow accumulations could have varied in the area or the newspaper's estimates may have been a bit generous.)

"... **THE SNOW WAS** welcome. The few that braved it in the open wrestled with the flaky swirls, blood a-tingle. The small boy was up early with his sled and overshoes, and reveled in it," the article said.

"... It was a stay-at-home day. The avenues and downtown shopping streets remained all but deserted. The hooded policemen pacing their beats, the street cars picking their way slowly over tracks choked with snow, and sweepers industriously cleaning the snow from grades and curves were the lone exceptions to the general rule of rest."

IT IS UNLIKELY that Richmond will get any snow this Christmas Day. Rain, however, is quite likely.

The National Weather Service forecasts mild temperatures and the likelihood of rain today through tomorrow across Virginia. The high in Richmond should be in the low 60s both days. The low tonight should be in the upper 40s.

The weather service said that since 1897,

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when snow records first were kept here, a trace or more of snow has fallen eight times on Dec. 25. In addition, a trace of or more of snow has fallen three times on Dec. 24. On two of those occasions, snow was still on the ground Christmas Day. On another four occasions, snow was on the ground Dec. 25 from previous snowfalls. In two other years, snow had fallen several days before Christmas but had melted by Christmas Day.

FOLLOWING ARE the years in which snow has fallen in Richmond around Christmas Day. The information was compiled by Hurtis Smith, meteorologist-in-charge of the National Weather Service here.

1900 — 7.2 inches fell Dec. 21.; none on ground Dec. 25.

1902 — 1.1 inch fell Dec. 25.

1908 — 17.2 inches fell Dec. 22-23.; 7 inches on ground Dec. 25.

1914 — 5.4 inches fell Dec. 25.

1919 — 6 inches fell Dec. 19.; patches of snow on ground Dec. 25.

1935 — 4.7 inches fell Dec. 22-23.; 2 inches on ground Dec. 25.

1939 — 2.2 inches fell Dec. 24; 1 inch on ground Dec. 25.

1945 — 4.5 inches fell Dec. 18-19.; 1.3 inches on ground Dec. 25, but snow melted during the day.

1948 — 0.9 inch fell Dec. 25.

1959 — Trace fell Dec. 25, but melted as it fell.

1961 — 0.4 inch fell Dec. 24 but melted as it fell.

1962 — 4.3 inches fell Dec. 25.

1966 — 3 inches fell Dec. 23 and 5.8 inches fell Dec. 24; 5 inches on ground Dec. 25.

1967 — 5.7 inches fell Dec. 22-23; none on ground Dec. 25.

1969 — 1.8 inches fell Dec. 25.

1970 — 0.2 inch fell late Dec. 25.

1971 — Trace fell Dec. 25.