

It's Time for a Parade!

On November 28, more than 3.5 million people are expected to line the streets of New York City. They'll look up to see Spider-Man, SpongeBob SquarePants, and other popular characters floating overhead. The giant balloons will be the biggest attractions in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

The Macy's department store put on its first parade in 1924 to try to boost sales around the holidays. Since then, the parade has been held every year except 1942, 1943, and 1944, when it was canceled because of World War II. Over the years, the giant balloons, colorful floats, and marching bands have made the parade a Thanksgiving tradition.

But the parade looked a lot different 100 years ago. Back then, it featured live animals from a local zoo, including bears, elephants, camels, and monkeys.

In 1927, Felix the Cat, a popular cartoon character at the time, became the first balloon to fly in the parade. This year, more than a dozen character balloons will soar above the 2.5-mile parade route.

The night before the event, volunteers inflate the balloons with helium. They strap down the balloons with nets to keep them from flying away. Each year, new balloons are added and others are retired. Who will join the fun this year?

—by Alicia Green



The Felix the Cat balloon at the 1932 Macy's parade

By the Numbers

About **50 million people** are expected to watch the parade on TV and online.



A Snoopy balloon has flown in the parade **more than 40 times**—the most of any character.

The parade includes about a **dozen marching bands** from across the country and **about 25 floats**.

Each giant balloon is guided by 80 to 100 handlers.

