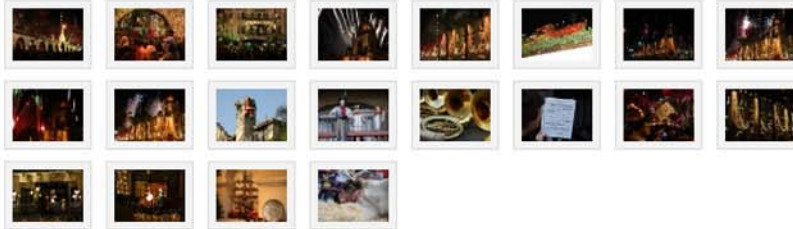


Thousands cheer as Mission Inn lights up

By Rich Linton, on November 25, 2011, at 9:03 pm

For the 19th consecutive year, thousands of holiday well-wishers packed the streets of downtown Riverside and joined in the countdown of 3-2-1, to signal the start of the annual fireworks and lighting ceremony at the Mission Inn.



Hotel owner, Duane Roberts, said the seasonal "Festival of Lights" is like going to Disneyland without having to purchase tickets.

At the conclusion of the 5-minute fireworks barrage, a switch was toggled and 3.6 million lights and more than 400-characters illuminated the walkways, alcoves and balconies of the famous 135-year-old hotel.

Adding to the festivities of the season, a 45 by 90-foot ice skating rink was in full operation on the mall at Main Street, and horse-drawn carriage rides driving the area streets, were seeing a steady line of customers.

A musical pre-show was provided by the Riverside City College Marching Tigers, and holiday music began after the lighting ceremony with the Factory Tuned Band headlining the main stage.



More than 3.6 million lights illuminate the historic hotel for the holiday season through Jan. 8. (Rich Linton/SWRNN)

A big hit with the children, were the two-reindeer housed in a viewing pen on the mall, while the Dickens Carolers sang vintage Christmas songs in front of Bella Trattoria.

The outdoor lights, animated characters, and mall-activities will continue nightly through Jan. 8.

