

## = Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic =

The Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic ( also known as The Bud Billiken Day Parade ) is an annual parade held since 1929 in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago , Illinois , United States ; it is the largest African @-@ American parade in the nation . It is held annually on the second Saturday in August .

Robert S. Abbott , the founder and publisher of the Chicago Defender , created the fictional character of Bud Billiken , which he featured in a column in his paper . David Kellum suggested the parade as a celebration of African @-@ American life . It is now the second largest annual parade in the United States . The focus of the parade is on educating Chicago 's youth .

In the 21st century , the parade features celebrities , politicians , businessmen , civic organizations and youth . It begins in the Bronzeville neighborhood on Chicago 's South Side and ends in Washington Park . The parade has been televised on WGN @-@ TV ( 1978 ? 2012 ) , WLS @-@ TV ( 1984 ? present ) and WCIU @-@ TV ( 2012 ? 2014 ) . National and international celebrities have attended and some have served as the parade 's Grand Marshal . The 86th Annual Parade took place on August 8 , 2015 , and was televised on WLS @-@ TV . In 2016 , the second Saturday in August falls on August 13 .

## = = History = =

Bud Billiken is a fictional character created in 1923 by Abbott , who had been considering adding a youth section to the Chicago Defender newspaper . While dining at a Chinese restaurant he noticed a Billiken . Some of the early Billiken columns were written by Willard Motley , who later became a prominent novelist . During the early 1930s , names of international youth were listed in the " Bud Billiken " section of the newspaper every week . Between 1930 @-@ 34 , approximately 10 @,@ 000 names appeared and were archived in the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library of the Chicago Public Library .

During the Great Depression , Abbott featured the Bud Billiken character in his newspaper as a symbol of pride , happiness and hope for black residents . The character gained prominence in a comic strip and the Chicago Defender newspaper . Although the character was created in 1923 , the parade did not begin until 1929 , when David Kellum initiated it as a celebration of the " unity in diversity for the children of Chicago " . It has since grown to become a locally televised event and the second largest parade in the nation .

The parade , which began on August 11 , 1929 , now includes politicians , beauty queens , celebrities , musical performers , and dozens of marching , tumbling and dancing groups . It has grown from a locally sponsored event to one with major corporate presence and is seen as a signal of the impending end of summer and beginning of the new school year . As such the parade sponsors raise money for college scholarships for local youth .

The parade route has changed over the years . The original route was along Michigan Avenue beginning at 31st Street , then turned east into Washington Park . Concern for north @-@ south traffic flow caused rerouting the parade route to South Parkway ( now named Dr. Martin Luther King , Jr . Drive ) , which runs directly into the park . At various times , street repairs have necessitated use of the Michigan route , but the current route is now the King Drive route . Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll of Amos ' n ' Andy fame were the first guests of honor in the original parade . Robert S. Abbott led the first parade in his Rolls Royce . Dr. Marjorie Stewart Joyner , president of the Chicago Defender Charities , Inc . , organized the parade for over 50 years . Numerous high @-@ profile celebrities and dignitaries have attended the parade over the years , including U.S. President Harry S. Truman , Michael Jordan , Joe Louis , Muhammad Ali , Duke Ellington , Adelaide Hall , Oprah Winfrey , Diana Ross , Lena Horne , Ethel Waters , Cab Calloway , Paul Robeson and Billie Holiday . Truman rode alongside John H. Sengstacke , who was Abbott 's nephew and took over the Chicago Defender in 1948 , and Mayor Richard J. Daley in the 1956 Parade .

Recent parades have featured popular musical acts as concert performers at the post @-@ parade picnic . In 2006 , approximately 26 million people saw the parade , including 25 million television

viewers and 1 @. @ 2 million attendees . The 2006 parade included 74 @, @ 000 participants and 160 floats and vehicles . The 2008 parade was dedicated to actor and comedian Bernie Mac ( star of The Bernie Mac Show ) and a native of Chicago ; he died an hour before the start of the parade .

In 1993 , a request by a black LGBT group to participate in the parade was declined by the organizers . Following legal action and the involvement of Lambda Legal , the Ad Hoc Committee of Proud Black Lesbians and Gays was allowed to participate in the parade .

= = Parade = =

The parade has categorized contests for participants such as best float , and best marching band . It takes place in Chicago 's Bronzeville neighborhood , starting at 35th Street and Dr. Martin Luther King Drive at the southern border of the Douglas community area , south of the landmark Victory Monument . It continues south to 55th Street in Washington Park . This route covers approximately 2 miles ( 3 @. @ 2 km ) . This route takes the parade through the Grand Boulevard and Washington Park community areas .

= = = 2007 Parade = = =

At the 78th annual parade in 2007 , then @-@ U.S. Senator Barack Obama served as the Grand Marshal for the second year in a row . Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley attended , and march participants included U.S. Senator Dick Durbin , Lieutenant Governor of Illinois Pat Quinn and the Rev. Al Sharpton . One float represented the Chicago 2016 Committee and included past Chicago Olympians Bob Pickens , Willie May , Diane Simpson @-@ Bundy and Kenny Johnson as well as the son of Danell Nicholson . The Chicago Bulls ' mascot made a guest appearance .

= = Grand Marshal = =

A notable figure is invited each year to serve as Grand Marshal , often featuring politicians or entertainers . Chicago native and R & B singer Chaka Khan served as Grand Marshal at the 85th annual parade in 2014 .

= = Theme = =

Bud Billiken Parade is themed every year by the parade committee . The tradition began in 1940 when the parade organizers themed the parade " Americanism " to demonstrate patriotism in the US within the African @-@ American community . Other themes over the years :

= = Picnic = =

The parade begins at 10 A.M. and ends at 4 P.M. After the parade , visitors are welcomed to stay in Washington Park for a picnic . The picnic has various festivities and vendor booths . The post @-@ parade festivities often include a concert . The 2006 parade featured Yung Joc , and the 2007 parade featured Pretty Ricky . However , it seems neither picnic included a concert .

= = Violence = =

The 2003 parade featured B2K . The concert was free with virtually unlimited space in the park for viewing . However , the crowd became unruly causing the concert to be curtailed . Over 40 attendees were taken to hospitals as a result of injuries in the violence , including two teenagers who were shot . At the 2014 parade , Two teenagers were shot after an altercation involving a group of black youths along the parade route near the 4200 block of King Drive around 12 : 30 pm .