



the **Bryn Mawr** Neighborhood Association's

Minneapolis, MN

Saturnalia

The Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Business Association produces the Saturnalia Festival, held in downtown Bryn Mawr on the “teenth” Saturday in December. Activities and attractions include musical performers, storytelling for children, a hayride tour of the neighborhood’s holiday lighting, masked reveling, hot chocolate and hot apple cider, toasted marshmallows and ‘smores, roasted chestnuts, and a visit from Santa Claus. Neighbors are invited to decorate their houses and gardens with lights to celebrate this event. Saturnalia brightens the darkest time of the year and offers an alternative to events such as Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, Christmas, and Kwanzaa. In the evening, following the event, Cuppa Java coffee shop hosts a party for adults.

The Saturnalia celebration, ancient Rome’s most popular, was named after Saturn, god of seed and sowing. With this event, Romans celebrated the completion of autumn planting. The Roman Empire originally celebrated for only one day, December 17, but Roman citizens later expanded celebrations to week-long celebrations, December 17-23. In addition to feasting, the Romans celebrated Saturnalia by giving gifts of wax candles and earthenware figures, and engaged in temporary role reversals. For the celebration, masters would serve their slaves. A funny felt-peaked hat was one costume component. Decorations included greenery swags and garland and gilded objects (gold – to symbolize the yellow sun), and candles in window openings.