

Moonshine days

By JOHN WILDMAN
Advocate Reporter

Strangers traveling through New Straitsville in southwestern Perry County over the Memorial Day weekend might be surprised to find Ohio Department of Liquor Control officials operating a genuine moonshine still in broad daylight.

Surprised, that is, until they discover the still is a featured attraction of the fifth annual New Straitsville Moonshine Festival slated for Thursday through Monday.

The celebration started in 1970 when the village of 1,000 saluted its centennial year with a toast to its bootlegging past. A year later the New Straitsville Betterment Association formed and turned the event into an annual affair.

According to Kenneth Burgess, association secretary, when the village's primary trade of coal mining waned during the Prohibition, many miners "took to bootlegging."

"They say some of the best bootleg whiskey in the United States came from New Straitsville," Burgess said.

The association will display five stills, including a 250-gallon contraption confiscated near the village just last July.

Last year 25,000 spectators jammed the five blocks of Main Street for the festival, Burgess said. Each year's proceeds go for village improvements, including new sidewalks, street signs, public restrooms and lights for the football field.

Rides will open 6 p.m. Thursday, but the main activities begin Friday with the 7 p.m. crowning of Miss Moonshine 1975. Ray Marlier and the Star Valley Boys from Lancaster will follow with music for street dancing.

Saturday will be Kid's Day, with a pet and bicycle parade, sack races and a pie-eating contest slated. Flippo, the Columbus television clown, will perform at 3 p.m. A puppet show and the crowning of Little Miss Moonshine will follow.

The Red Wilson Country and Western Show will take the spotlight from 6 to 9 p.m. Saturday. The Akron native will be joined by Ethel Delaney and her Buckeye Strings and Dixie Brady and the Ohio Promenaders. Street dancing to the tunes of Country Beaver and the Rhythm Drifters will round out the evening.

The Songsmen will open Sunday's events at 1 p.m., followed by an old-fashioned songfest, talent contests and a

performance by the Tipple Family. Street dancing will follow.

The big event Monday will be the annual parade with more than 60 units. Burgess said the parade will be in honor of Thomas H. Boyle, a past association treasurer who died in April.

Other festivities Monday include an Adelphi Community Band performance, talent contests and street dancing.

Souvenir hunters will find numerous bootlegger items for sale, including jugs and miniature stills.

Burgess said officials from the Ohio Festival and Events Association will attend the festival to consider it for membership in the association.

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