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City Basks In Festival Atmosphere

By Patricia Brown
E-G State Editor

All was in readiness for the 1987 Lancaster Festival USA to begin Thursday afternoon as the opening parade made its way through the downtown area, the fairgrounds and Rising Park.

Flags fluttered smartly in the breeze. Balloons bobbed from nearly every conceivable space, including the front of city hall and most of the downtown parking meters. The Festival food concessions and information booths were in place, the little white lights had been strung in the trees in the downtown park. Ribbons of Festival colors had been stretched across the windows of

area businesses. Downtown windows held a variety of displays of antique shoes, vintage Christmas decorations, quality examples of artisans' work, bridal costumes, quilts, and much, much more.

TV weatherman Jym Ganahl, the grand marshal, riding in the horse-drawn Kroger wagon, led the parade.

He was followed by other horse-drawn, and occasionally donkey-drawn, vehicles carrying people in spangled costumes who presumably were performers in Zoppe Circus Europa, which opened Thursday night for its seven-performance run.

Also wearing sparkling costumes were pom-pom girls and baton twirlers

from local dance studios.

Providing music for the march were a harmonica band, the Adelphi Community Band and the rollicking notes of the steam calliope from Kitch Greenhouse, Miamisburg.

Also on the parade route were vintage cars, with costumed members of Americana players riding in several of them. A group of 4-H horse queens and queen candidates rode by in, appropriately, classic Mustang convertibles.

Float entries included the Montessori School's decorated with giant elephants, and one from First United Methodist Church's Bible School.

Marching groups included children in out-sized Festival T-shirts and Festival poster carnival masks; Indians, pirates, clowns; youngsters from Family V programs; Indian Guides; the Frontier Players; what was probably the smallest parade participant riding in a "Tom Thumb wagon;" an orange gorilla; a big chicken; and the Valley View Gators complete with a full-size gator.

Children rode decorated bicycles, and a few grown people rode unusual bicycles, such as an old-fashioned bike with the huge front wheel.

The Lancaster Fire Department aerial truck was in the parade, as were

members of the area Chamber of Commerce's Coachmen's Club in an old-time fire truck. From time to time someone would conveniently set a small fire on the parade route so that one of the Coachmen could jump out of the fire truck and extinguish the blaze.

Probably one of the warmest parade participants was Roamin' Raccoon, who rode and waved from the back of the local visitors and convention bureau vehicle.

Children scrambled happily along the curbsides for candy and treats tossed by parade marchers, and in all, it was a generally festive atmosphere to begin the 10-day Lancaster Festival.

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