

# First festival set pace

## Early goes fondly recall farmer's fest

By JILL ZIGLER  
Staff Writer

The horse-shaped billboard promoting the Farmer's Fall Festival might be an eye-catcher, but it doesn't compare to the automobile displays that were set up at the town's first festival in 1913.

Russell Donewitz says he was 13 when he attended the first Farmer's Fall Festival, arriving in town with his mother from their Park Hollow Road in a horse and buggy.

This year's festival runs next Thursday through Sunday.

"There used to be a few automobiles under a tent," Donewitz says. "Automobiles were a scarce item. No doubt they scared the horses," he says, adding he only knew two people then that owned the contraption.

"It was a farmer's get-together... a place where farmers brought their goods to be displayed," said Donewitz, who will be 90 on Monday.

### Remembering the first festival

The festival included horse and poultry shows and displays of crafts, pumpkins and corn. Also of major interest was the hospital display, designed to give the public a better idea of the services provided by the hospital.

In its era of penny postcards, he wore homemade clothes on the street while women wore dresses that reached the ground, he says. Peavy Schachne, who's father Richard Schachne was chairman of the first festival, remembers wearing knickerbockers with high button shoes and seeing the first entertainment of the day.

His father owned M. Schachne and Sons, a department store located at Pant and Main streets for many years. The store displayed underwear decorated with red and white striped bows in front of the store.

Schachne, who was 8 years old during the first festival, remembers a fondly as the time when James Cox, Ohio governor of Ohio, attended the festival.

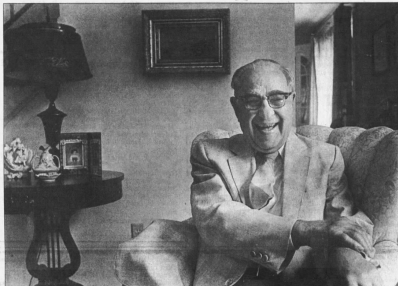
"We had the Tom Thumb engine at the festival, which was known as 'the little engine that could,'" Schachne says. "They put the engine on the street car tracks and different exhibits such as the governor and my father were pulled by the engine in a rail car."

**Even Bill Cody was here**

The festival attracted "tremendous crowds," Schachne says he remembers Clevelander visiting getting off the train and marching up Main Street as far as the courthouse.

The 87-year-old enjoyed live musical entertainment such as "The Twentieth Century Band" and the all-star "Mighty Band." High-wire acts also were popular entertainments of the day.

He thinks it was perhaps 1916 when Bill Cody rode in the parade — a memorable event, he says.



Peavy Schachne's father, Richard Schachne Sr., was chairman of the first Farmer's Festival in 1913. Tom Johnson/Gazette

"Bill Cody was to be in Village Park and my father was upset about it," Schachne says. "The Schachne's father thought it would take away from the festival because Bill Cody was so well known."

"Then Bill said 'Let's have a Bill show and everybody named Bill can ride in a parade,'" he says. The parade took place with Bill Cody leading the procession of Bill from Village Park up Pant Street.

"Everybody knew of him (Cody) and he was able to see him was something. He was such a figure on his big white horse and his mane of white hair."

It was an event which benefited the town, he says.

"People seemed so happy," Schachne says. "The folks threw confetti at the acts. It was a way of giving."

### Exciting displays

Charles Tomnitz's family owned "Tomnitz Flowers" on E.E. Main St. He says merchants tried to place something unusual in the booth during the festival — his family made a floral arrangement in the shape of a railroad.

### Still fun today

Paul Utzig is coordinator for the festival today and one of the original organizers of the festival since it was revived in 1986.

He says he thinks the last of the early festivals took place in 1925. Portsmouth began a similar festival and dropped it around 1957 due to lack of interest, he says.

Utzig says he became interested in

the streets downtown instead of in the park, but the festival are today, he adds.

Also, there weren't the beauty contests that occurred in the festival days.

It wasn't the winners of the beauty contest that rode on the "American Beauty" Road in the 1921 Farmer's Fall Festival parade. Mary Collins says she rode on the red and white float decorated with roses along with other first, second and perhaps grades girls.

She says she doesn't really remember the event because she was only 6 years old when she rode the float. But her husband, Arnold Cytren, who was about 13 in the last festival he attended in the early 1920s, says he remembers hotdogs or "Coney Island" or "Coney" as they were known then.

What stands out in his memory is the pig dunking machine on Second and Pant streets. It worked on the same principle as a dunking machine, with a pig walking on a platform to be dunked.

"The festivals were marvelous," Arnold Cytren says. "Everybody took time off from them. There wasn't much to do then."



Russell Donewitz, 89, recalls the first Farmer's Festival. Brian Cuyler/Gazette

reviving the festival from the memories his 96-year-old father, Charles Utzig Sr. "These stories ignited a spark which resulted in a group of interested citizens reviving the festival with a modern twist," Utzig says.

## Next week's Farmer's Fall Festival schedule of events

The Farmer's Fall Festival runs Thursday through Sunday next week.

**Thursday**

Noon — set up

4 p.m. — Festival opens

5 p.m. — Opening ceremonies at Band Stand; softball on Diamond I

6 p.m. — Little Miss Farmers Fall Festival Pageant elimination, sponsored by Citizens National Bank

7 p.m. — Junior Miss Farmers Fall Festival Pageant elimination, sponsored by Citizens National Bank

8 p.m. — C to R Express Country Music at T's Best, co-sponsored by Herndon Chrysler Plymouth and Ford

10 p.m. — Festival closes

**Friday**

10 a.m. — Festival opens

Noon — Join us for lunch

2 p.m. — The Golden Broom Mass

4 p.m. — TV 2 Live News Cast

5 p.m. — Lip Sync Contest elimination, co-sponsored by Peiza Blue and Blue Advertising

6 p.m. — Antique Tractor Pull, sponsored by Petrus

7 p.m. — The Peeters on stage, sponsored by Artco

Miscellaneous: Mountain Men Encampment by Candle-light 7:30 p.m. — Festival closes

**Saturday**

10 a.m. — Festival opens

11:30 p.m. — Pet contest, sponsored by Bi-Jac Pet Foods

Noon — Pet Parade, sponsored by Petland; Mountain Men Encampment, free, sponsored by YSA

12:30 p.m. — Little Miss FFF Pageant Finals, sponsored by Citizens National Bank, Larry Coughner TV 6

McJannet Miss FFF Pageant Finals, Purple Melrose Puppets on Airway Stage

1 p.m. — Antique Car Show, Army Field; Baby Changing contest, co-sponsored by Peiza Blue and Blue Advertising

2 p.m. — Youth Horse Show, Pig-a-Thon, YMAA area, Antique Tractor Pull, sponsored by Petrus; Antique Tractor Show, sponsored by Green Line III

3 p.m. — Kid Farm Games; Pike County Shrine Circus; 1920s Car Cruise

4 p.m. — Buffalo Chip Throwing Contest; Antique Tractor Contest, sponsored by Clevelark Commercial Bank

5 p.m. — Lip Sync Contest Finals, co-sponsored by Peiza Blue, Western Avenue, and Book Advertising; Chiggers, Steady Stompers, Army stage, FFF Park Parade the parking on Water Street from Pant to Walnut from 3 to 6 p.m.

6 p.m. — Antique Tractor Pull, sponsored by Kingston National Bank; Mountain Men Encampment opens by lantern, 81

10 p.m. — Festival closes

**Sunday**

Noon — Festival Opens, Country Music, sponsored by Peiza Blue, Irish Horse Show, Farm Games; Antique Tractor Show, sponsored by Green Line III; Stearns Calabrese, sponsored by Building, Softball, Diamond I

3 p.m. — Hog Calling Contest, sponsored by Bi-Jac Pet Foods

4 p.m. — Steady Stompers Chiggers, sponsored by Stearns of America

5 p.m. — Big Wheel Race, sponsored by Clevelark Commercial Bank

6 p.m. — Festival closes

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Sat, Mar 23, 2019