



Remembering the events and effort for the 1973 Arthur Centennial

By Marty Yeakel

The 100th anniversary celebration of the founding of our town Arthur was held from Aug. 18-25 in 1973. This article summarizes that week and the events leading up to it which will hopefully bring back many memories for those still around and will help show the younger generation just what a big event the centennial celebration was.

The Aug. 18, 1973, Centennial edition of the Arthur Graphic-Clarion contains a wealth of information as to the history of Arthur with long articles by Arthur Martin and Minnie Reeves and pictures of founding fathers, buildings and churches once found in Arthur. There are also proclamations on the front page by both President Richard Nixon and Governor Dan Walker congratulating the community on its 100th anniversary. An article by longtime editor George C. Dickman (some may remember "Let's See by George C.") in which he mentions that copies of this edition can be bought for 10 cents! Editor Dickman also shares in that editorial some of the history of the town that can be found in the Centennial book that was published at that time.

In fact, there were two books published in connection to the Centennial. The first, "Arthur, Illinois - 1873-1973" contains an extensive history of the town along with many pictures from the past. There is information about churches

and businesses, manufacturing and organizations. Also, the history of the Amish and how they came to the area and their contributions to the town's success. The book even contains songs written about Arthur from local residents.

The other book is a hardcover that contains the program for the daily events and is dedicated to "the many people who donated their time and effort to make our Centennial Celebration so successful." Again, the book contains many historical photographs but also pictures of centennial committees, Brothers of the Brush groups and Centennial Belle groups. This book was put together after the Centennial as it contains many pictures of events that took place during Centennial week.

Local dignitaries and celebrities included Robert Ellison, village president, and Jim Winningham, Arthur Area Centennial Corporation president. Dwight "Skeeter" Singer was publicity chairman. Hans and Lena Oye were Arthur's Centennial couple, married 63 years in 1973. Erica McHenry and Tommy Baldwin were named Little Miss and Little Mr. Centennial. Marge Heerd wrote articles for the Campaign-Urbana Courier and Phyllis Stock was the Campaign-Urbana News-Gazette correspondent.

The paper notes that the centennial only came about because of the efforts of many of the community members

who put much time and effort into making the celebration a success. "Only by cooperation has the job been done!" Planning began as early as the year before and many meetings were held urging citizens of Arthur to participate in the celebration which resulted in the formation of several committees. As noted above, Centennial Belles and Brothers of the Brush groups had been formed. Centennial stock was sold as well as Centennial coins. Arthur Commemorative booklets were available for purchase as well.

Groups also participated in area events such as the Hammond Centennial parade and in several caravans in other towns including Arcola, Atwood, Decatur, Lovington, Mattoon, Sullivan and Tuscola. There was also a boat parade on Lake Shelbyville.

Events to be held during the Centennial celebration included a Centennial Queen competition with Anna Hoke Russell eventually being crowned by virtue of the number of tickets sold for votes. A total of 35 ladies had entered the contest. The Queen's Ball was held on Saturday night, Aug. 18, to kick off the week. Daily events included:

Sunday, Aug. 19 — Religious Heritage Day

Monday, Aug. 20, and Tuesday, Aug. 21 — Old Fashioned Sidewalk Sale Days

Wednesday, Aug. 22 — Pioneer and Homecoming Day. First production of "Arthur-

ama — 100 Years Revisited." Arthorama, with a cast of 250 townspeople, told our story from practically the beginning of time. It involved people of all ages portraying everything from Indian chiefs to those dressed as colonists and early Americans, dancing girls, frontiersmen and women, and many Scouts, both boys and girls. It was a huge production enjoyed immensely by cast and audience alike.

Thursday, Aug. 23 — Youth Day and Ladies Day

Friday, Aug. 24 — Agriculture Day

Saturday, Aug. 25 — "Our Dynamic Tomorrow" was the theme for the day and included a time capsule ceremony, parade, and fourth and final production of "Arthorama." It was estimated that as many as 15,000 were in attendance for the parade, which followed the usual Homecoming parade route but also took a detour out by the Arthur Home.

In regard to that time capsule, one of the most interesting building projects in 1973 was the new Arthur Welcome Center (known as the tourist center at that time). The design was based on the old railroad depot that once stood along the tracks just to the north of the present-day building. It was completed in time to enable the installation of the time capsule in the floor of the main area. Citizens of Arthur were given the opportunity to place items of their choosing into envelopes purchased for \$1 and \$2.

Summing up one more piece of information from the Centennial edition of the Arthur Graphic-Clarion is a quote from Mr. Dickman, "Throughout the years, the growth of Arthur has also been steady. Business locations are always occupied and stores have kept pace with the times. The town has been blessed with forward looking people." This writer believes that still holds true today with the growth seen over the last 50 years in business and industry both in the



Anna Hoke Russell was named Centennial Queen



Bud Stock portrayed Chief Thundercloud

town and in the countryside hope that the spirit of forward partnering with our Amish looking people continues and community and friends to will be celebrated when we keep the town and area growing and prosperous. Let us commemorate our Bicentennial in 2073.



Construction for Arthur's Welcome Center (then called the tourist center) began in 1973.



CENTENNIAL FAMILY PICTURED are Ernie Bartholomew, Beth Bartholomew, Marcy Good, Kent Stock, and Mary Herschberger.



CENTENNIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE members included (First row) Martha Albers, Secretary of Arthur Area Centennial Corporation; Barbara J. Conlin, Chairman of Woman's Participation Division; Richard Nofrey, Chairman of Special Days Division; Marjorie Stiff, Secretary for Executive Committee; and Frances E. Atteberry, Chairman of Spectacle Division. (Second row) Douglas H. Jurgens, Director of Arthur Area Centennial Corporation; Henry Czuj, Chairman of Spectacle Ticket Division; E.L. Jurgens, Chairman of Operating Capital; Carl Heerd, Director of Arthur Area Centennial Corporation; Dwight Singer, Chairman of Publicity Division; Delbert Taylor, Headquarters Chairman and Vice-President of Arthur Area Centennial Corporation; and Gale Daugherty, Treasurer. (Third row) John Dukeman, Chairman of Revenue Division; Robert Lowder, Chairman of Men's Participation Division; James Winningham, General Chairman; Robert Ellison, Chairman of Special Events Division; and Mike Herschberger, Student Coordinator.


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