

The Several Centennial Celebrations of Dubois County

BY DON STEEN

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Dubois County was replete with Centennial celebrations on July 4, 1876. Rather than consolidate its festivities in any one county event, local communities each took it upon themselves to celebrate 100 years of independence.

Ferdinand supposedly drew the biggest crowd for its Centennial celebrations. A large tobacco house had been reserved for the festivities and St. Ferdinand Church organized a church concert to get things rolling. The church concert alone sold 1,400 tickets, and plenty more were in attendance beyond that.

After an address by Dr. Kempf Jr., Soliga's string band got the crowd to dancing. As many as 180 couples were counted on the dance floor at a time for the duration of the day.

Half a dozen liberty poles were raised in Jasper, heralded by performances from local bands. From there, one band then left for Huntinburg and another to Eckert's Grove just outside Jasper. The grove was the site of multiple speeches from Professors Sweeney and Keller, who addressed a large crowd in

English and German. Meanwhile, the ladies of Jasper hosted a picnic north of town. While events were somewhat dispersed, one common thread was a chance to unwind.

"At both of these places dancing was enjoyed by the young folks, and all seemed to have a good time – a little interfered with by an untimely shower of rain," recorded the *Jasper Weekly Herald*. "At night the dance was continued at Berger's Hall until a late hour. Much praise is due to the old musicians, who though not having practiced together for some time, made excellent music for the occasion."

In Huntinburg, it was the churches who took the lead in celebrating the day. Congregations worked together to host a picnic and dance at Gherkin's Grove.

Ireland, likewise, celebrated the day at its Shiloh Church, where several addresses were made.

In Celestine the festivities were centered at Buchar's store, where a large liberty pole and flag was raised. The Celestine band played "Red, White and Blue" and a reading of the Declaration of Independence was performed by Dr. W.R. Osborn.

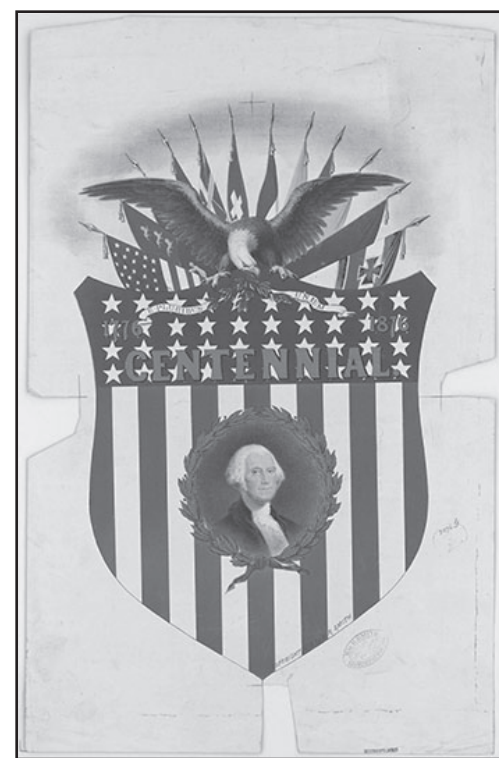
As in other communities, Celestine then

let the young people dance to their hearts content. Marshal Buchar was present to preserve order.

The *Jasper Weekly Courier* was quick to laud the example of the Founding Fathers and the nation they built:

"All of the world are now reaping the benefits of their wisdom, in the more liberal government, which have taken the place of the despotisms of 100 years ago, and which the example of the United States has morally compelled the monarchs to adopt or give up their thrones."

Pictured at right is an example of the kind of artwork that would have proliferated communities across the country during the exciting Centennial Year of 1876. By then the last of the Revolutionary War veterans had passed away, making the legends of their deeds as exciting to both young and old as World War II media might be to a modern audience.



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