

= Fourth of July =

In

Old Lyons Farms

Only twice in this area's long history have there been community-wide celebrations on the Fourth of July.¹ Observances in adjacent communities including Weequahic Park, Newark, and Warinanco Park, Elizabeth, as well as the cost of a program and the general exodus of many residents for shore and country have all tended to lessen the desire for festivities here.

Old Lyons Farms however as a part of Union Township in Union County and Clinton Township in Essex County conducted day-long programs in 1895 and 1896. Only limited records were found concerning the first event, although we have assurances from David H. Doremus, a participant in both, that they were similar in activities.

The "Elizabeth Daily Journal" described the first program as "quite creditable despite the rain. The community caught the full spirit of patriotism in a citizens' parade. A comical feature of it was a man named Matthews dressed in a bloomer costume. Washington and other historical characters were represented. The parade was headed by a drum corps. The display of fireworks took place the following night because of rain. A large pole was erected and a flag was placed on it."

The committee for the second holiday program was formed early in the spring of 1896 at Hillside Hall, as Hillside Avenue School was called. Officers were selected from among the fifty persons who

¹ Russell Looker Park in Mertz Avenue was dedicated in 1919 at ceremonies by the township.

served on the committee. Dr. Joseph Ward, an uncle of Dr. William R. Ward, presided at the sessions and William C. C. Matthews served as secretary.

Abram P. Morris was selected as parade chairman and grand marshal of the mounted men. Dr. Ward and Fred C. Crane were named to head the unmounted men. Thomas Fitzpatrick was placed in charge of the carriages and William H. Goldsmith and E. A. Silverthorn in charge of the floats. Mr. Morris also assumed responsibility of raising the necessary funds for parade expenses. Contributions were sought from the residents and donations soon totaled \$94.77 including \$10 each from John Kean and his brother, Hamilton Kean.

Mr. Silverthorn, also appointed chairman of the athletics committee, posted a list of events in Looker's Store and announced that the deadline for registering in the events was July 2.

PICNIC COMMITTEE

Other committees and chairmen were: Picnic, Mrs. John H. Doremus; music, George Lyon; fireworks, Mr. Fitzpatrick; and orations and literary committee, John Leyser.

Mrs. Doremus planned for a picnic to be held in the woods of J. D. Winans estate on the crest of the hill above Maple Avenue overlooking Staten Island, Brooklyn Bridge and New York Bay. She announced that each person should bring his own food basket and that coffee and sugar would be provided from the picnic fund.

Mr. Lyon formed a drum corps to march in the parade. This was made up of residents of the community augmented by a few hired musicians. Mr. Fitzpatrick was allotted \$50. for the purchase of fireworks from the Wilkinson, Gaddis and Company for an "elaborate display."

Mr. Leyser arranged a program for the patriotic services and a poetry contest. An appropriation of \$10. was approved for erection of a speakers' platform for these services by Christopher Columbus Bailey. It was placed in front of the home of William Williamson in Elizabeth Avenue, as North Broad Street was then called, at Williamson Avenue. A large canvas was donated by Henry Jagers to protect the platform.

Charles C. McBride, editor of the "Elizabeth Daily Journal" was selected as judge of the poetry contest and \$5. was appropriated for the purchase of an award for the winner.

In response to an appeal by Mr. Morris, a committee of women was organized to encourage decorations on each house along the route of the parade. They included Mrs. Bailey in Williamson Avenue, Mrs. J. W. Hensley in Maple Avenue, Miss Jessie Tobin in Prospect Avenue (an earlier name for Chancellor Avenue, Newark), Mrs. F. H. Illman in Hillside Avenue and Mrs. M. Williamson in Elizabeth Avenue.

Dr. William R. Ward obtained a Revolutionary War cannon from Minton H. Tichenor of Hilton for the parade. Ogden Woodruff was appointed supervisor in charge of firing it with \$5. worth of gun powder.

Finally the big day came! Residents were awakened by the sound of cannon. Fourteen salutes were fired, one each for the original thirteen states and one for Lyons Farms. The parade formed at 8:30 A.M. in Maple Avenue at Williamson Avenue and presented a fine appearance, according to a Journal account. The line of march passed the decorated houses countermarching at the Crane house in North Broad Street to proceed up Hillside Avenue. The procession also passed the dwellings of Mr. Fitzpatrick and Benjamin Chapman.

Mr. Bailey served as grand marshal of the entire parade. J. H. Jeffrey and C. E. Lane were his assistants. Mr. Leyser was drum major followed by the corps under supervision of Mr. Lyon. Bicycles tastefully decorated led the way.

David H. Doremus as "George Washington" rode on a white horse accompanied by his brother, Harry, and T. Elmer Martin, dressed as aides. Isaac Williamson dressed as "Uncle Sam" followed them. Also featured were Mr. Matthews in a grotesque costume, Charles Slingerland as an "Indian" on the little black pony of Mrs. James Williamson Jr. and George Looker and Raymond Crane as cowboys. Mr. Silverthorn was mounted on Mr. Jagger's horse, which was reputed to be the largest in the state.

Members of the Union Township Committee who rode in carriages included William Bonnell, D. Black. A. Woodruff and John H. Doremus.

"GODDESS OF LIBERTY"

A liberty float was drawn by nine horses. Miss Lula Williamson posed as the "Goddess of Liberty" surrounded by women, men and children including Miss M. Lyon of Plainfield, a descendant of

the Lyon family. John Hensley dressed in a blue and white striped duster and antique straw hat coached a mule pulling an old two seater along with a bundle of hay. Seated in the wagon in costume were members of the Brunner family. A one-seater wagon was converted into a surrey by use of a soap box to carry more of the Brunners.

The parade halted at the rostrum where many assembled and listened to the reading of the Declaration of Independence by Dr. William R. Ward. Mr. Leyser read the communication from Mr. McBride awarding the poetry prize to Mrs. H. T. Adams for her "Columbia, A Song for Independence Day, 1896," which was based on "My Maryland! My Maryland!" Mrs. Adams read the poem and was presented with a loving cup by Mr. Leyser. Guy Williamson sang "Marching Through Georgia" in a soprano voice accompanied by a chorus and Rev. R. P. D. Bennett gave an impromptu oration.

Mr. Fitzpatrick donated twenty quarts of milk for the picnic luncheon which followed and ice cream was sold on the grounds. Profits from these sales were used to defray the cost of fireworks.

The athletic contests were conducted in a field adjoining the picnic grounds at 1:30 P.M. Field marshalls were J. B. Morrison, George Titus, George Spendlove and H. V. Tibbs. Some of the winners and events were: Sack race, Guy Williamson; 100-yard dash, Jack Tobin; three-legged race, Elmer Martin and Harry Doremus; ladies' hoop race, Jessie Tobin; and shot put, Henry Jagers.

The tug-of-war between Essex County residents under the captaincy of Mr. Brunner and Union County residents with Mr. Tunison as captain was won by Essex County. Charles F. Bond was time-keeper. A slight fuss followed the decision, but it was announced that the Essex team won fairly.

The baseball game followed on Moses Hand's lot. The married men called the "Benedicts" and captained by Theodore Slingerland defeated the single men, "Bachelors," captained by Charles Conn by 25 to 10 runs. Ralph Tobin was umpire.

The fireworks at dusk also were displayed on Mr. Hand's lot.

A shower threatened the festivities for a time and about fifty people gathered on the front porch of the Doremus home in Hillside Avenue and sang songs. They were answered by a group on

another porch about a quarter of a mile away, it was reported.

The celebration ended with a deficit of \$2.15, but the committee members passed the hat and collected \$2.48. The surplus was donated for oil for the lamps.