

## HOMECOMINGS

The First Homecoming (from an illustrated history of Cherry Valley, Illinois.) “The idea which resulted in the first Cherry Valley Homecoming was conceived in the mind of Herbert Leaman, Master of the South Guilford Grange. His plan was quickly endorsed by the grange, and arrangements were made to have the event on Saturday, October 1, 1927

Cherry Valley’s two churches, and south Guilford Grange and members of every organization in Cherry Valley joined in the big celebration. Members were asked to contribute ten dollars if they could. Mrs. Charlotte Gannon was named secretary of the homecoming committee and the late George Kezar, who was the beloved mail carrier for thirty years, was named treasurer. Mr. Leaman, of course, was general chairman.

Congressman Henry Rathbone and Congressman John T. Buckbee were the speakers. The festivities opened with a parade headed by the Kirkland band at 10:00 a.m. At 11 a.m. there was a baseball game, and a bounteous dinner served at noon by women of the two churches. The program which was presented at 2:00 p.m. opened with an address of welcome by Mayor C. J. Hyland and a greeting to visitors by former mayor, Mrs. Josephine Slater. Postmaster Arthur L. Johnson introduced the congressmen. The Kirkland band played again in the evening, and the boy scouts conducted a candlelight service. This began a series of homecomings which has become a tradition.”

These Homecomings were held on Village Green which today is the baseball diamond. We have several Homecoming booklets from 1927 through 1951 in our Historical Museum in the old Town Hall building.

In the 1927 booklet it is mentioned that St. Ritas & Cherry Valley Methodist churches served lunches and dinners on the village green. The stoves were actually brought to the grounds for the ladies to cook on. The booklet also mentioned that they had ball games with the married men verses the single men. There were musical programs, dancing, outdoor movies, carnival rides, and outdoor games.

In 1943 there was a formal dedication ceremony of the Community Honor Roll sponsored by the Arthur Buck Post #783 of the American Legion. Lieutenant Colonel Harvey E. Wilson of Camp Grant was the guest speaker for the service. There was a program of dancing Friday and Saturday from 10 p. m. to 1 a. m. in Oberg's Hall. George Edwards and his orchestra played for the dancing.

1945--There were boys and girls races (6 to 18 years of age). There were contests of egg catching, marshmallow eating, basket shooting, nail driving, balloons, and horseshoe pitching. There were ladies and men's races, girls and boy's shoe races, girls and boy's sack races, and a scavenger hunt. Musical selections: Knute Runberg--accordion, Georg Gotto--guitar, and Dale Manson--solo. Also, acrobatics by Sally Anderson.

In the 1948 booklet there was music by the Gorsuch Hot Shots, a vocal by Shirley Summers, accordion solo by Michael Allongze, piano selections by "Millie" Jean Hallstrom, a vocal duet by Lodena Wilt and Betty Bennett, and an accordion duet by Benita Banks and Mona Larson. There was a greased pig for the boys between 15 and 25. Also, a prize was given for the largest family present on the ground.

In 1949 "The Drum and Bugle Corp--The Eagle Band will play Saturday evening. This band has been the national champion of the FOE since 1940. It has played for the vice president of the United States. Its' manager won the title of the world champion drum major at Paris. Its' majorette has won many honors. This band of fifty pieces is know for its' high, brilliant music."

1949--There were water fights, a greased pole, egg throwing and pie eating contests. Music: Benita Banks--accordion, Richard Cordonnier--vocal solos, Skipper Nash and Darlene Pitney--vocal duet, Benita Banks--piano solo, Beverly DeWane--accordion solo, and Mona Larson--accordion selection. Tap dancing: Patricia Ann Dickinson and Nancy and Peggy Gustafson. Mona Larson was marshalette of the parades for many years.

These Homecomings were the highlight of the autumn season in the Good Old Days.