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*Mooreville's Treasure Trove #14 (July 2009)*

*Bill Buckley, Indiana Room Librarian*

**Historic Mooreville, IN Scenes and Places**

**Taken from the Past and Brought into the Present**

**Old Settlers Picnic (1870-Present)**



*Figure 1: Residents of Mooreville and vicinity gathered in August 1885 for the Old Settlers Picnic at what is today known as Old Town Park on South Street near the East Fork of White Lick Creek.*

Samuel Moore, founder of Mooresville, along with John D. Carter and other pioneer settlers, organized the inaugural Old Settlers' Reunion in 1870. Mooresville was regarded as the center of the first settlements established in Morgan, Hendricks, and Marion Counties, and, as such, Moore, Carter *et al.* felt it would be appropriate to spend a day in "special communion" to commemorate the pioneer settlement of the area.

The first Old Settlers Reunion and Picnic was held in August 1870 at the Mooresville District Agricultural Society's fairgrounds. On October 18, 1877, Samuel Moore donated this land for a park, which is now known as Old Town Park, along South Street near the East Fork of White Lick Creek. The park was to be the perpetual site of the Old Settlers gathering. Moore stipulated that the park include gravel walks and "a good plank fence," and he mandated that "no baseball, bandy ball or horse racing" be held on the premises.



*Figure 2: A circa 1885 view of Samuel Moore's donated land near the East Fork of White Lick Creek, which was used as the site of the Old Settlers Picnic between 1870 and 1995 and is known today as Old Town Park on South Street near East High Street. The photographer, probably J. P. Calvert, took this picture from a hill northeast of the park (looking southwest). The old Waverly Road appears on the left.*



An August 1879 newspaper article described town park as enjoying “a beautifully shaded butternut grove” in which a grand stand had been erected and decorated in evergreens for Old Settlers. The Mooresville Silver Cornet Band provided music. “Every [water] pump in the vicinity was pumped dry by 9 o’clock p.m.” on the day of the reunion, the article continued. Vendors, using water from the East Fork of White Lick Creek, sold lemonade at a nickel a glass. They could squeeze 1,500 glasses from a tub of ice “adulterated with one lemon,” quipped the newspaper reporter.

The Old Settlers celebration has been held annually for the past 139 years, excepting 1943, when the town council decided it would be impracticable to hold the event due to limited resources during the middle of World War II. Ida Fogleman, Samuel Moore’s granddaughter, strenuously objected to this interruption, so the picnic was reinstated the following year. Throughout the decades, the picnic gradually evolved into a festival. The event was held at Old Town Park until 1995; thereafter, it has been held at Mooresville’s Pioneer Park on Indianapolis Road. For many years it has been customary to honor Mooresville’s oldest citizen with a rocking chair. Another long-standing tradition is the crowning of an Old Settlers Queen, sponsored by Kappa Kappa Sigma. Queen candidates raised money for local youth and community projects.



*Figure 3: The rocking chair competition at the 1970 Old Settlers festival. Among the oldest Mooresville residents at the time were those named above. Jake Mann constructed many of downtown Mooresville’s business buildings standing today.*

The Old Settlers Parade, which launches the festivities, began in August 1966. The parade includes floats to commemorate historical and cultural themes pertaining to Mooresville and the surrounding area. Spectators line the streets of downtown Mooresville to watch the procession pass.

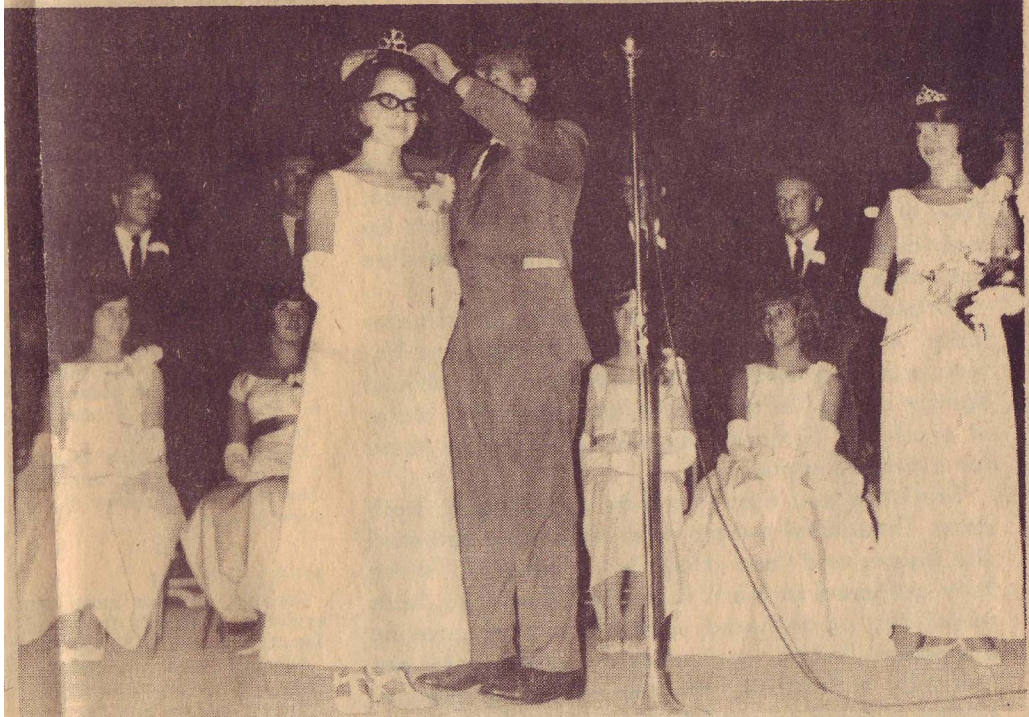


*Figure 4: The Mooresville High School Marching Band performs during the Old Settlers Parade on Aug. 15, 1979.*

*Figure 5. Mooresville Lions Club issued this commemorative plaque for the 100<sup>th</sup> Old Settlers Picnic in 1971.*





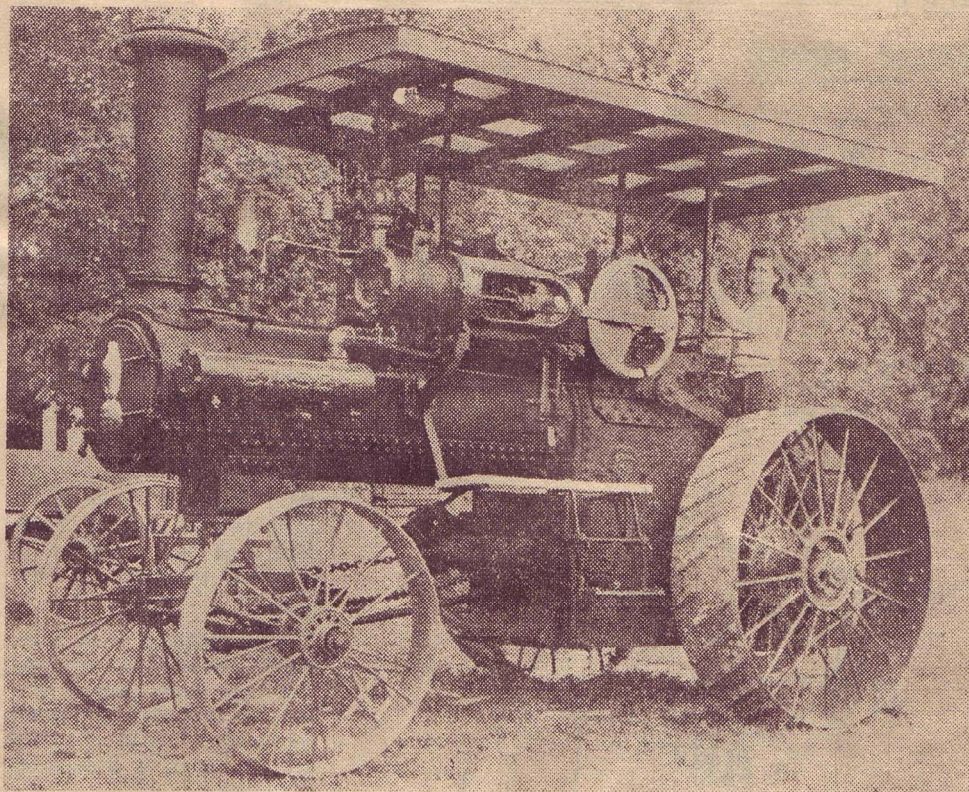


*Figure 6: Lt. Governor Robert L. Rock crowns 16-year-old Janie Allison of Mooresville as the 1966 Old Settlers Queen. First runner-up was Debbie Olleman of Monrovia; second and third runners-up were Jeri Barlow and Sandy Fleener of Mooresville. Sandy received the congeniality award.*



*Figure 7: This 1919 photo shows four Mooresville ladies attending Old Settlers.*





**TURNING BACK TO 1905**—Mrs. Bernard Cook checks out her 1905 steam engine that at one time was used to power threshing machines. The engine, along with other relics, some dating back to Indiana's founding 150 years ago, will be in the 95th annual Mooresville Old

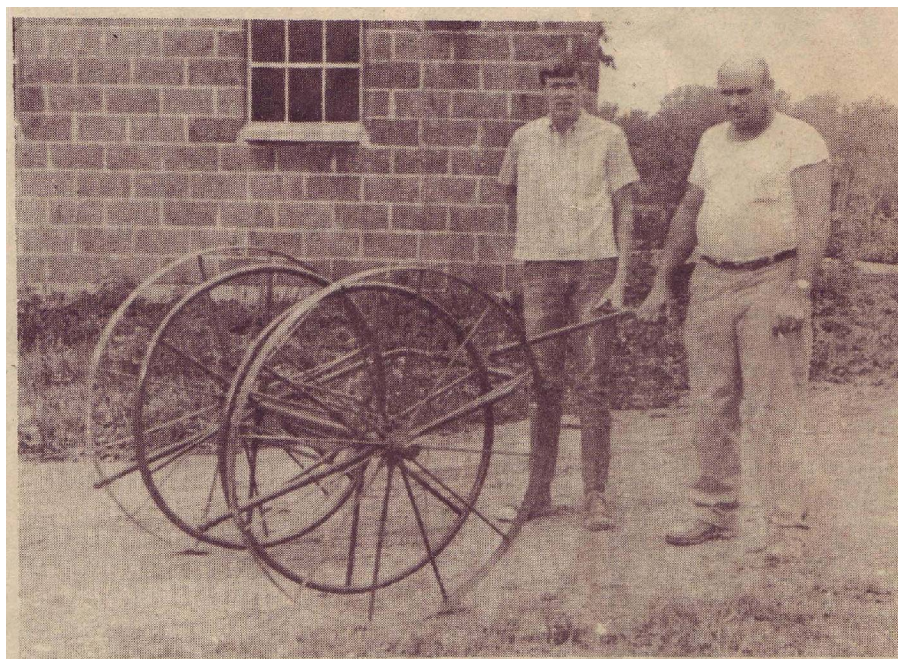
Settlers parade scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. tomorrow at the Mooresville Friends Church. At the Town Park, where the parade ends, a three-day picnic will begin with entertainment, concessions and selection of an Old Settlers queen Monday.

*Figure 8: In the August 1966 Old Settlers Parade, Mrs. Bernard Cook displayed her 1905 steam engine used to power threshing machines.*





*Figure 9: In the August 1966 Old Settlers Parade, Claire Sellars drove members of the 1933 Mooresville Fire Department (Forest Rusie, Elza “Buck” Perry, Todd Squires, and Clyde Ferguson) in a 1919 Ford truck towing a 1905 (or older) horse-drawn hose cart.*



*Figure 10: In The [Mooresville] Times photograph (Aug. 4, 1966), Dennis and David Loudermilk hold the 1905 (or older) horse-drawn fire hose cart. The Loudermilks, along with Winston Tackett, repaired the hose reel to working condition.*





*Figure 11. The Mooresville Band performed at many Old Settlers Picnics since its inception in 1870. This turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century photograph shows the Band standing on North Indiana Street, immediately north of the Main Street intersection in downtown Mooresville (among various “calling cards” left by horses on the street). Players included various prominent Mooresville citizens, including Alf Elliot, Fred Cooper, Earl Fields, Robert Nelson, Walter Thompson, Clint Burge, Otis Burke and Ben Cooper. Also identified on the photo is an “F. Stout,” a “Mr. Pidgeon,” and a man whose surname was Dolen. Unfortunately, the photo identification did not specify which gentlemen belonged to these names.*