

SMITHFIELD MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Founded November 11, 2009

Presents

SMITHFIELD, MAINE
100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
AUGUST 1940

Incorporation of Smithfield

IN THE HOUSE.
THURSDAY Feb. 13.
Bill read once and to-morrow assigned
—to incorporate town of Smithfield (part
of Dearborn, East Pond plantation, and
part of Mercer.)

Maine Legislature.
FRIDAY, February 15.
Bill to set off certain lands from Dearborn to Waterville was taken up. Mr Getchell of Anson wanted to refer it to a joint select committee, giving as reason that there was another bill before the House (incorporating the town of Smithfield) connected with the present and that it would be proper that they should both be considered by the same committee. If his motion should prevail, he would move to refer the other bill to the same committee.
Mr Main opposed the motion. Those who were interested in both bills, had left for their homes, and it would involve considerable expense to recommit the bill. The motion was lost, yeas 29—nays 80. The bill then passed to be engrossed.
Bill to incorporate Town of Smithfield came from the Senate amended and passed to be engrossed. The several amendments were adopted in concurrence. Mr Main then moved to strike out the seventh section of the bill which provides that the inhabitants of the proposed town shall vote as heretofore in separate classes, until a new apportionment. The motion prevailed.
Mr Coburn, of Bloomfield, moved an amendment providing that the inhabitants of the town shall pay taxes as heretofore, until a new valuation.
Mr Main moved an amendment providing that the Bill shall take effect from and after its passage—the motion prevailed. Mr Getchell then moved to lay the Bill on the table. Mr Main opposed—the motion was lost—yeas 43, nays 78. Mr Getchell then moved to amend so as to include a greater portion of Dearborn in said town. Mr Main opposed, and the motion was lost. The question was, on motion of Mr. Getchell, taken by yeas and nays.

After a little over 2 weeks of discussions and haggling in the Maine Senate & House a bill was passed to incorporate the town of Smithfield on Saturday February 29th, 1840.

Maine Legislature.
MONDAY, February 17, 1840.
Bill to incorporate the town of Smithfield came from the Senate, that body refusing to recede and concur with the House, in striking out the 7th section, proposing a conference and appointing conferees. The House concurred in appointing a conference, and joined Messrs. Main, Wentworth and Delesdernier.

Maine Legislature.
TUESDAY, Feb. 25.
The conferees on the disagreeing vote relative to incorporating the town of Smithfield, reported that they had met the conferees on the part of the House, and unanimously agreed to recommend to that body to recede and concur.

LEGISLATURE OF MAINE.
IN THE SENATE
SATURDAY, Feb. 29.
Petitions presented and referred—of Robert Douglass, for compensation; of J. W. Hight, that certain articles may be exempt from attachment.
Passed to be enacted. Bill to divide the town of Lisbon, and incorporate the town of North Lisbon. Bill to incorporate the town of Smithfield.

While it appears that the town of North Lisbon was also incorporated on the same date, further research shows that additional discussions occurred in the legislature the following week and the name of the town was officially incorporated as Webster on March 7, 1840. It is now known as the town of Sabattus.

Happy 24th Birthday Smithfield

Smithfield, Dating From 1840, Has 25th Birthday

SMITHFIELD, Feb. 29 (Special)—Today, Leap Year Day, brings to this small Somerset County town, the 26th birthday and its 100th anniversary.

Not unlike individuals born on Feb. 29, the town has had a birthday only once in each four years and today, while exactly a hundred years old, the community is having only a 25th birthday of its founding.

Smithfield, once a part of Dearborn, was incorporated on Feb. 29, 1840. At that time it included a small part of Mercer and East Pond Plantation.

By 1850 Smithfield had a population of 878 persons and a valuation of \$112,800. While the population decreased to 350 persons in 1930, the valuation increased to \$276,000 due to the development of the North Pond area into a summer colony.

Observance of the anniversary will be held next Summer with the arrival of tourists.

As the Portland Evening Express points out, when you are born on Leap Day, you only have an official Birthday every 4 years. What they forgot is the fact that each century year must be divisible by 400 to be a Leap Year. This means that 1900 was not a Leap Year so it is Smithfield's 24th Birthday.

But, it is still our 100th Anniversary!

SMITHFIELD PLANS CELEBRATION OF 100TH BIRTHDAY; TOWN WAS INCORPORATED ON FEB. 29th

Although Smithfield, under its blanket of snow, will today very quietly observe the 100th anniversary of its incorporation as a town, plans are in the air for a gala celebration and Old Home Week in the summer, possibly in July, when the several thousand summer visitors who annually spend many weeks there, may join in the fun.

Smithfield is the only town in the state to have been incorporated on the last day of February in Leap Year. On this day, 100 years ago, the population was in the vicinity of 1,000 souls. That was the time when the village boasted a saw mill, carding mill, grist mill, shoddy mill, starch factory, tannery, a factory for the manufacture of hand rakes, two carriage shops, two blacksmith shops, and two wood-working shops.

Now the population is 374; the mills and factories are no longer in operation; and while there is some social activity during the winter, as a whole, the town is resting up for the big whirl which starts with the arrival of the first cottagers in early spring and continues until late fall. An estimated 5,000 summer

people make the town their home at sometime during the season. Two lakes, East and North, are contained in the town, East Lake being the source of the Belgrade chain of seven lakes. On these are any cottages, half a dozen sporting camps, a boys' camp and a girl's camp.

Fishing in the two lakes is a great pastime and the late Frank Champlin who gave more than half a million dollars to the New Colby used to be a summer resident in Smithfield and was considered the greatest pickerel fisherman in the vicinity.

In the early days there were six school districts; now there is a consolidated school housed in a building built last year and not yet dedicated. The dedication is expected to form a part of the Old Home Week program.

It is understood that an article will be put in the town warrant to see if the town will appropriate a sum of money to use for the Old Home Week celebration. Whether the vote is "yes" or "no," Smithfield will no doubt make some recognition of the fact that it is a "Leap Year town."

Portland Evening Express
2/29/1940

Waterville Morning Sentinel
2/29/1940

Planning for the 100 Anniversary Celebration

\$200 Raised for the festivities

The dates are set and events are being planned

Old Irish tradition allows ladies to propose to men every 4 years on Leap Day. Maybe this tradition will be carried over to the 4-day celebration. ☺

Town Meetings

SMITHFIELD

Moderator, Luther I. Hartford; clerk, Eugene E. Charles; selectmen, Hadley D. Perkins, Luther Hartford, Vernon Merrill; treasurer, Durwood J. Mosher; tax collector, Leone D. Witham; road commissioner, Ralph Kilgore; member of the school board, Raymond Groves.

Appropriations: Advertise fish and game resources, \$100; advertise Maine Publicity, \$85; roads and bridges, \$1200; upkeep third class roads, \$1074; upkeep state aid roads, \$1066; pay last note on bridge, \$676; snow roads, \$1200; note on school house, \$1000; road patrol, \$540; Supt. and school committee, \$110; commercial bonds of tax collector and treasurer, \$50; support of poor, \$100; common schools, \$2600; repairs of school house and grounds, \$100; school nurse, \$20; care of cemeteries, \$100; Memorial Day, \$5; tax rate, 50 mills; town expense account, \$1900; total amount raised, \$11,370; amount raised last year, \$10,884.20.

* \$200.00 was voted to help observe the 100th anniversary of this leap year town. It will be observed in the month of July with an Old Home week. A committee was appointed, Ivan Harlow, Leone Richardson, and Ernest Stevens. Members of Fairview grange will help make this a gala affair.

Bangor Daily News - 3/6/1940

Smithfield To Observe Centennial

Plan Old Home, Leap Year Jubilee

Special Despatch to The Press Herald

Smithfield, March 20—Smithfield's centennial committee held its organization meeting this week and have announced Aug. 8, 9, 10 and 11 to be the days set aside for old Home Week and Leap Year Jubilee. The committee, Ernest Stevens, Ivan Harlow and Leon Richardson, was appointed at the annual town meeting by the moderator, Luther Hartford, who authorized them to select a number of days in which to observe the centennial of the town and to plan and promote a program of entertainment and instruction.

Acting as an executive committee, the three men are planning to appoint several sub-committees to advise and direct many features of the celebration. They have been pleased

by the marked enthusiasm of the townspeople and the offers of support of the out-of-town organizations, such as the Skowhegan Fair Association, through Francis Friend, the Kennebec Fish and Game Association and the Belgrade Lakes Guides Association.

Much interest is being turned to the dusty attics and barn lofts by the young people who are eager to find and repair the clothes and tools used by their great-grandparents many years ago.

Local organizations expected to take an active part in the celebration are the schools, the Grange, the Broom Club, and the Farm Bureau. Representatives of these groups, together with Ray Groves, Clarence Tracy, Bert Perkins, Lon Groves, Myron Merrill, Clarence Carpenter, Leon Witham, Eugene Charles, Roland Bickford, Melvin Harlow, Luther Hartford, and Vernow Merrow are expected to meet soon with the executive committee to start work in preparation of a program.

At this meeting, some of the suggestions dealing with a farm progress show, a parade, the dedication of the new school, displays of antiques and handicrafts, a hobby and collectors show, boat and swimming races, field events and other things will be discussed.

Portland Press Herald - 3/21/1940

Smithfield Planning "Leap Year Jubilee"

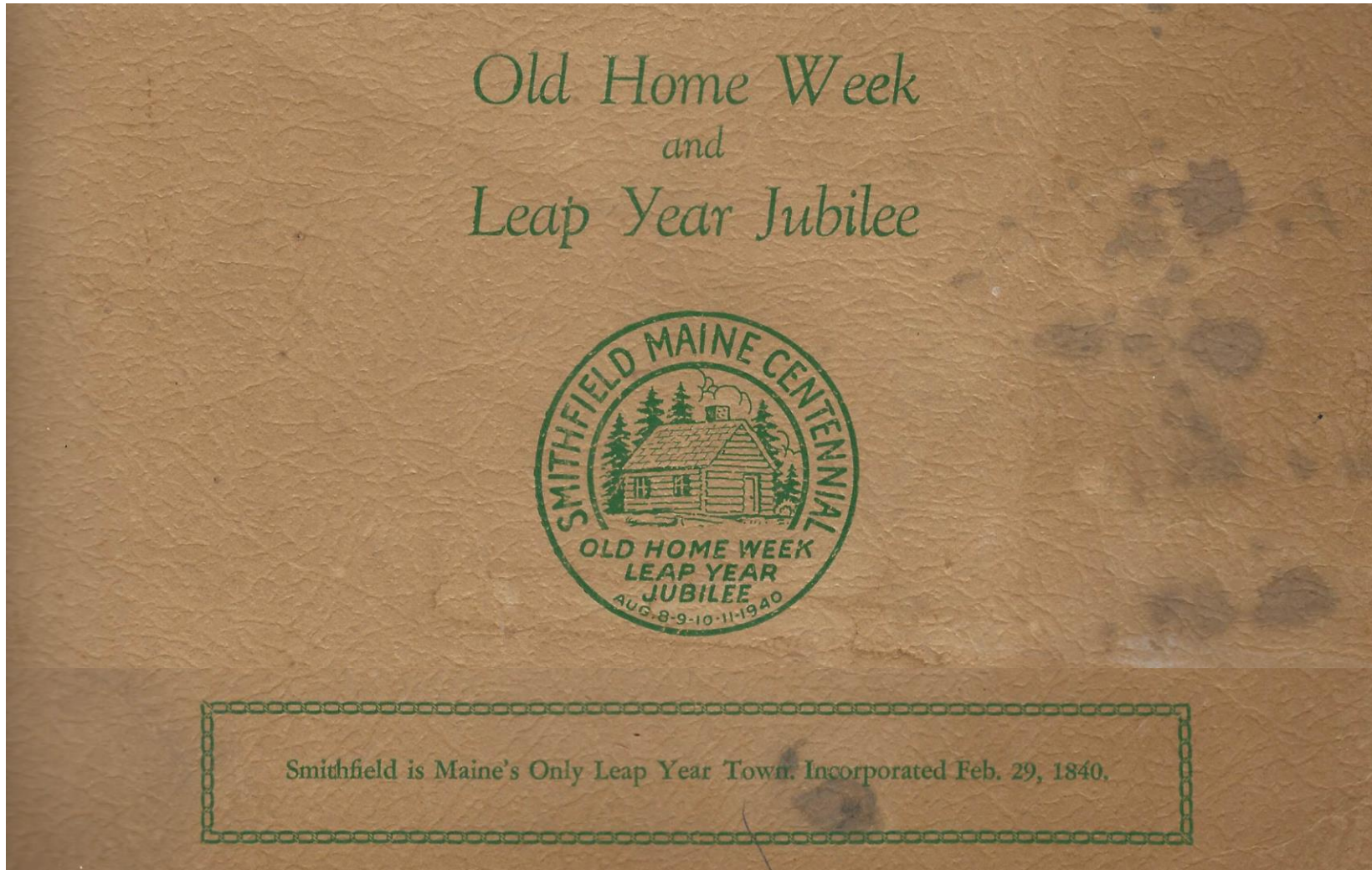
SMITHFIELD, Me., April 28—(AP)—Residents of Smithfield are so proud their town was born on a February 29, they're going to make their centennial year celebration in August a "Leap Year Jubilee."

A committee in charge of the jubilee and Old Home Week, August 8-11, reported that the leap year motif would be stressed throughout and added that Smithfield probably wouldn't be a very comfortable place for bachelors who wanted to stay that way.

Bangor Daily News - 4/29/1940

It Finally Arrives

From the Cover of the Souvenir Program
(an original copy on file at the Groves House)



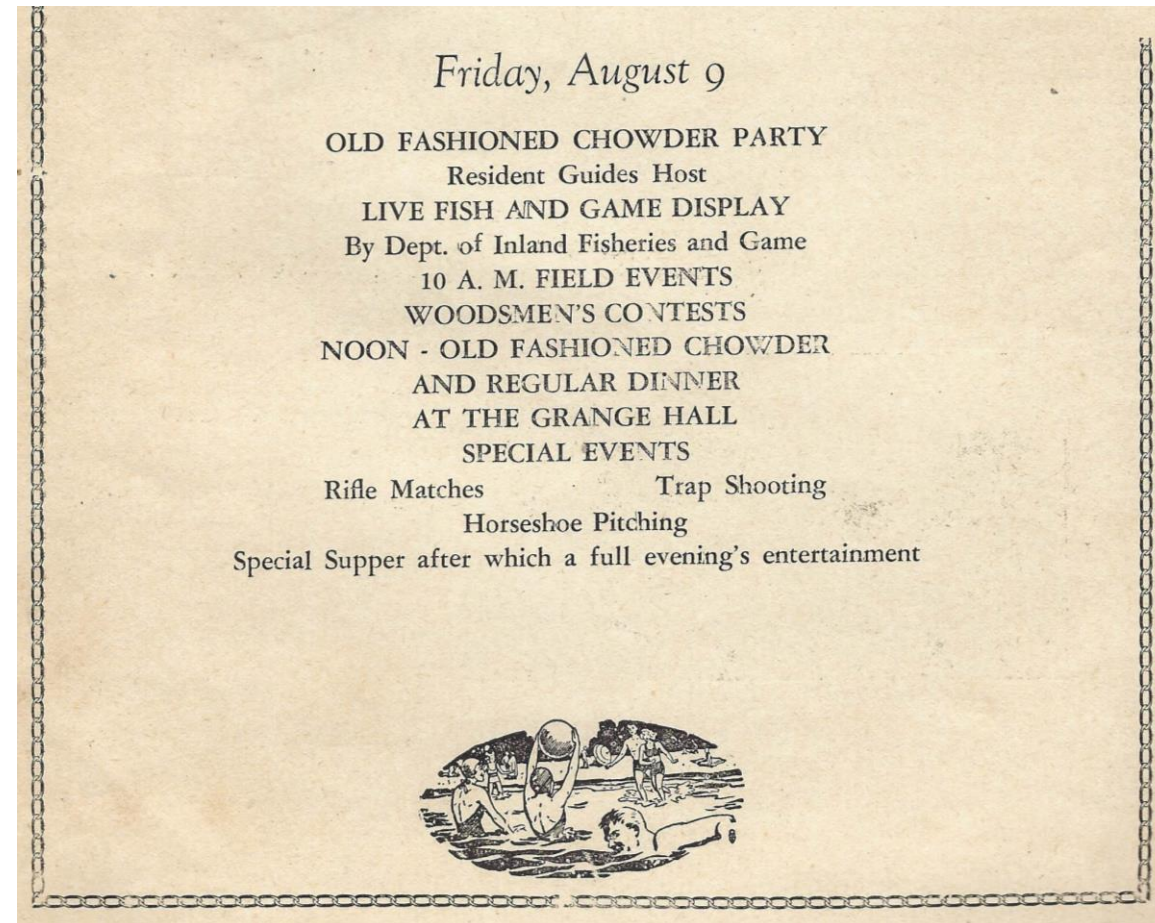
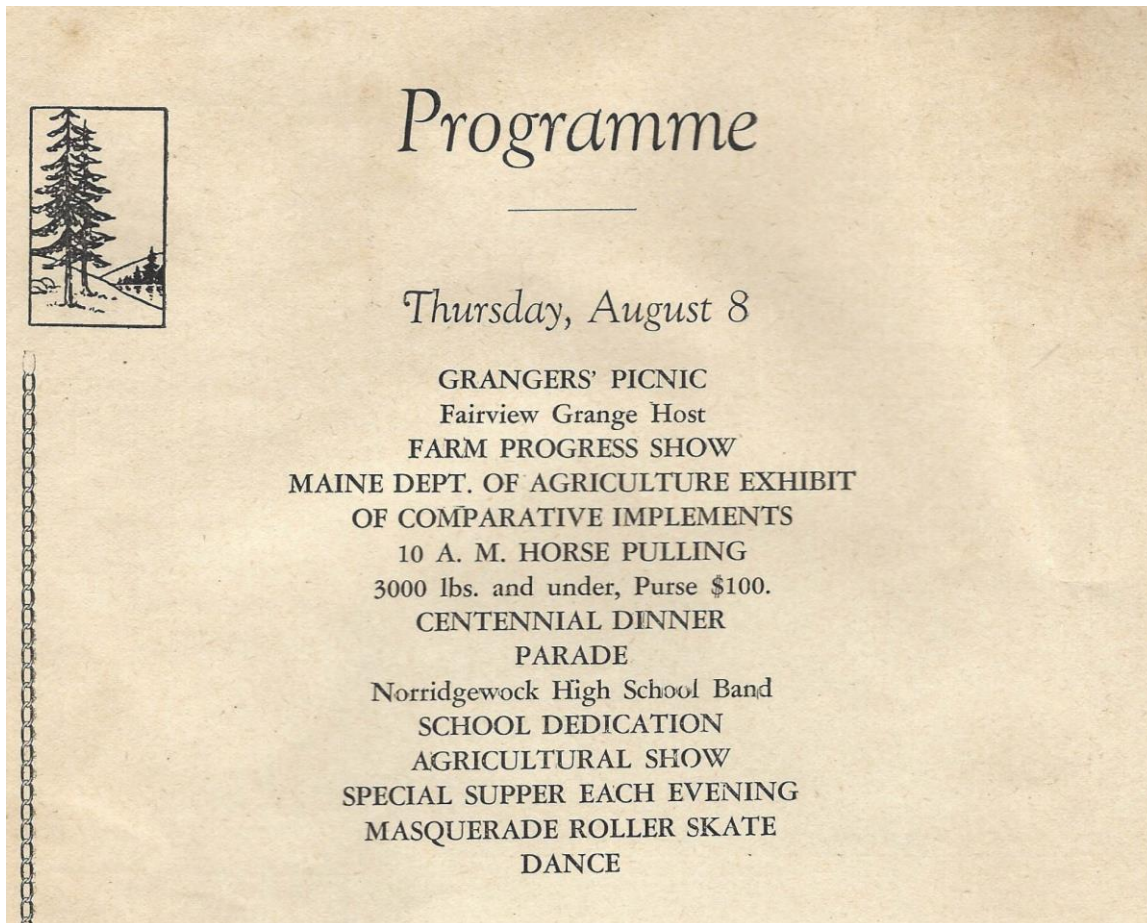
Official Greeters For Celebration



Charlotte Jewett (on the high wheeler) and Daisy Groves (on the trike) on Sunset Camp Beach, with Roller Rink in background, were named as official greeters for the celebration.

The Programme For Day 1 & 2

From the Souvenir Program
(an original copy on file at the Groves House)



The Programme For Day 3 & 4

From the Souvenir Program
(an original copy on file at the Groves House)

Programme

Saturday, August 10

SPORTSMEN'S SHOW
EXHIBIT MAINE FOREST SERVICE
Together with
U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
10 A. M. OX PULLING
/ Foot and Under Purse \$50.
Sweepstakes Purse \$50.
SWIMMING EVENTS
Midgets - Juniors
GRANGE DINING ROOM OPEN TO PUBLIC
LOG ROLLING CANOE TILTING
TUB RACES
OLD TOWN INDIANS
With Peter Francis
SPECIAL SUPPER EACH EVENING
SOFTBALL AT TRACY'S
TALENT SHOW
SING SING AND ROLLER SKATING
DANCE



Sunday, August 11

10 A. M. ENTRIES FOR BOAT RACING
CLASSES A - B - C FREE FOR ALL
11 A. M. - RACING STARTS
NOON - TURKEY DINNER
MODEL FLYING MEET
CENTENNIAL PROGRAM
BEACH PARTIES AT SUNSET GROVE
BASEBALL AT TRACY'S
CONCERT - OAKLAND BAND
SPECIAL SUPPER EACH EVENING
KEN MCKENZIE AND HIS ENTERTAINERS
MOVING PICTURES
ROLLER SKATING



The Parade

August 8, 1940

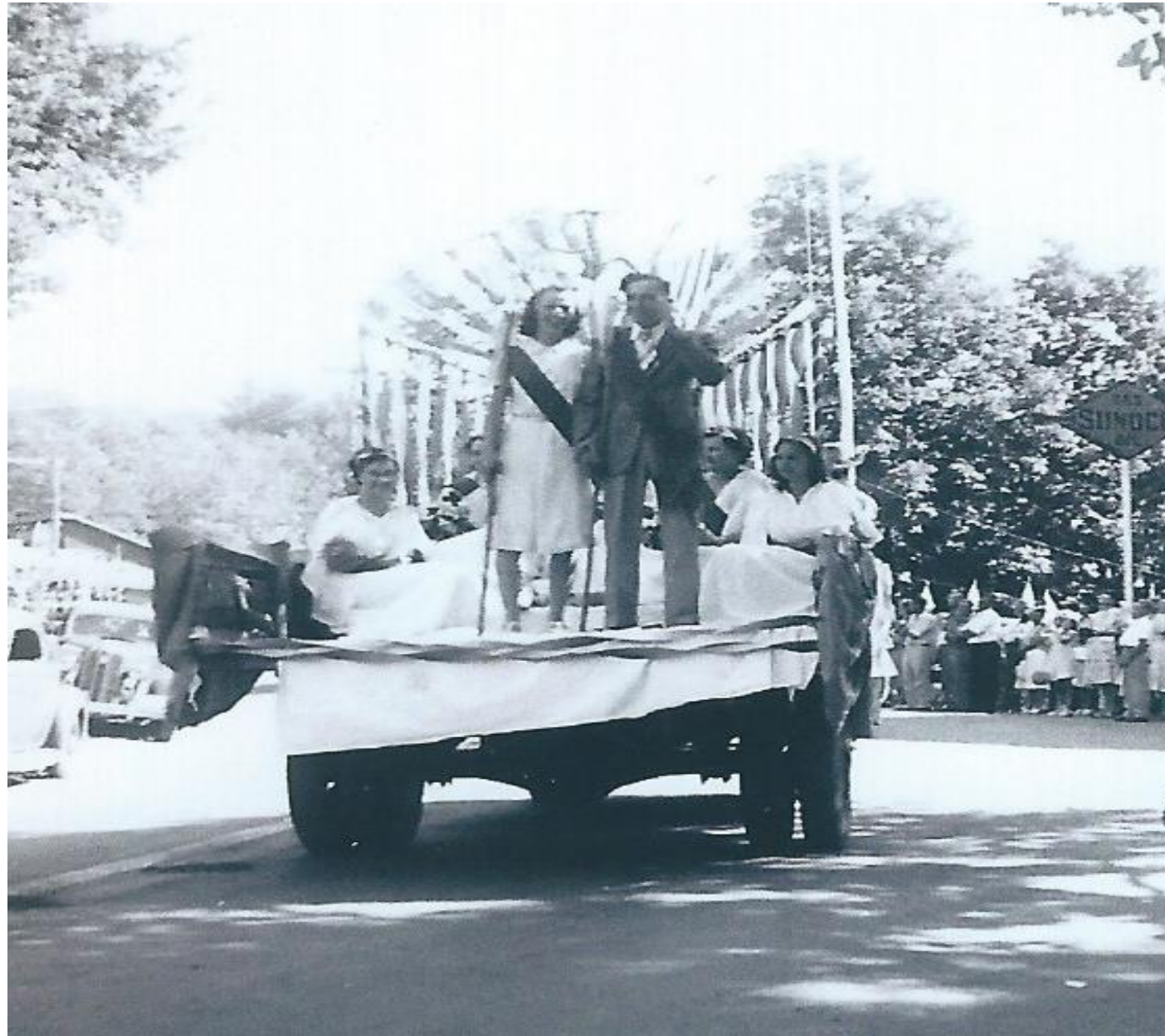
The parade was a colorful affair and marched over a two mile route from Tuttle's corner past the cottages, turning at the Laura Hall cottage, and marching through the village to the school house. The State Safety car cleared the path for the parade which was marshalled by Walter Taylor and Miss Pearl French on horseback. Next came the Norridgewock high school band, R. B. Ghen, leader; the Sunset Beach float, made to represent a beach with 24 bathing beauties on the sand, bright colored beach umbrellas, and the bath-house keeper with his broom. The Fairview Grange float contained the lady officers and the assistant stewards and lady assistant steward. This was followed by Selden Harlow on a pony; a roller skating float from the North Pond rink with Charlene and Douglas Carpenter and Daisy Groves on roller skates; the White Owl Boatshop float of a fisherman in a boat; and a pair of safety bicycles ridden by Sanford Harlow and Bob Hersum.

From the Waterville Morning Sentinel
August 9, 1940

Sunset Camps Float – Verney Merrow's Truck with Daisy Groves on left, Louise Groves on right



Fairview Grange #342 float with Bertha Towle & Emery Taylor



Seldon Harlow on horse, Verney Merrow's truck with Daisy & Louise Groves on each Fender.



Seldon Harlow on Horse



Ralph Markham (self-appointed mayor) & Deputy Sheriff Leon D. Witham

Smithfield's self-appointed mayor, Alfred Markham, the only bearded man in town, stole the show as he appeared in the parade in tall hat, swallow-tailed coat and other mayoralty trappings. Mr. Markham has let his whiskers grow since last Christmas especially for this occasion.



Deputy Sheriff Leon Witham covered the parade grounds in out-moded regalia,

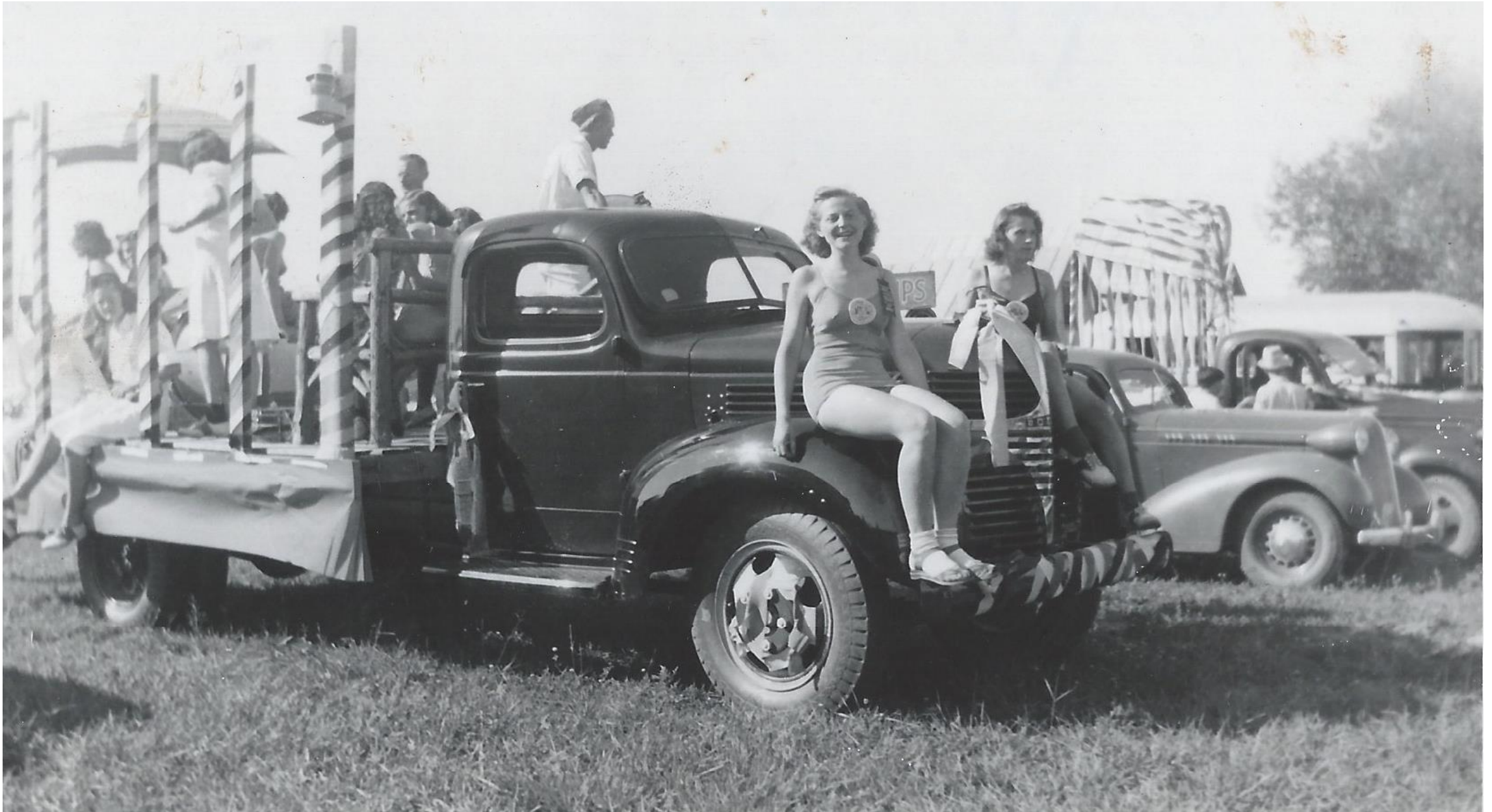
Leon Richardson & Eugene Charles



Leon Richardson & Chester Berry



Sidney Witham leaning on Cab of truck, Daisy & Louise Groves on left & right fenders respectively



Daisy & Louise Groves among others on Verney Merrow's truck
parked in front of Louise Apartments & Daisy Cottage

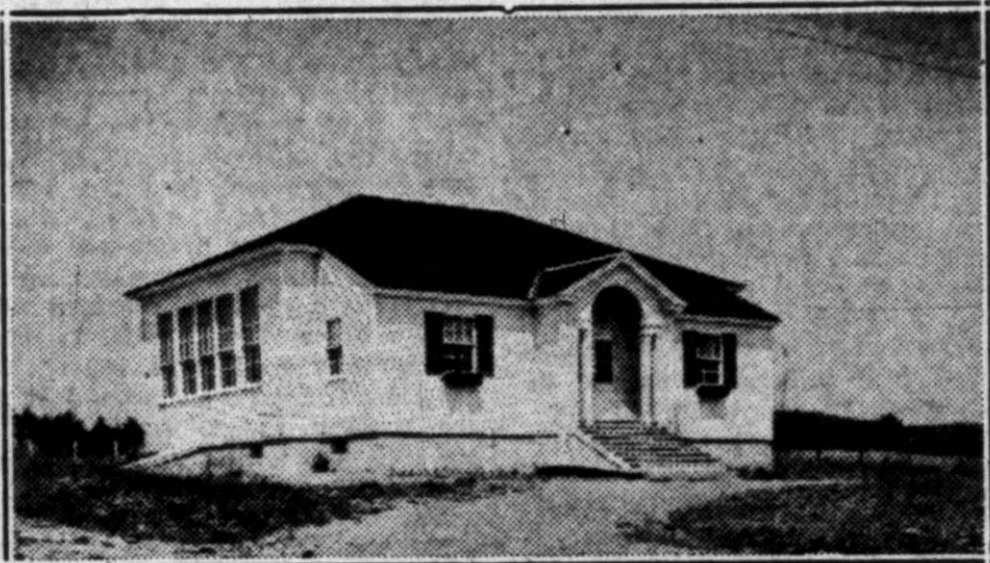


Daisy & Louise Groves on Verney Merrow's Truck with Verney driving it



School Dedication

Dedication Of New School Features Opening Day Of Centennial At Smithfield



Smithfield's New Schoolhouse dedicated yesterday

A feature of the program was the dedication of the new school building which climaxed the parade. The building was put into use for the first time, last fall, consolidating the several schools of the town. Located a short distance from the center of the town, it is an attractive up-to-date school house, painted white with blue shutters.

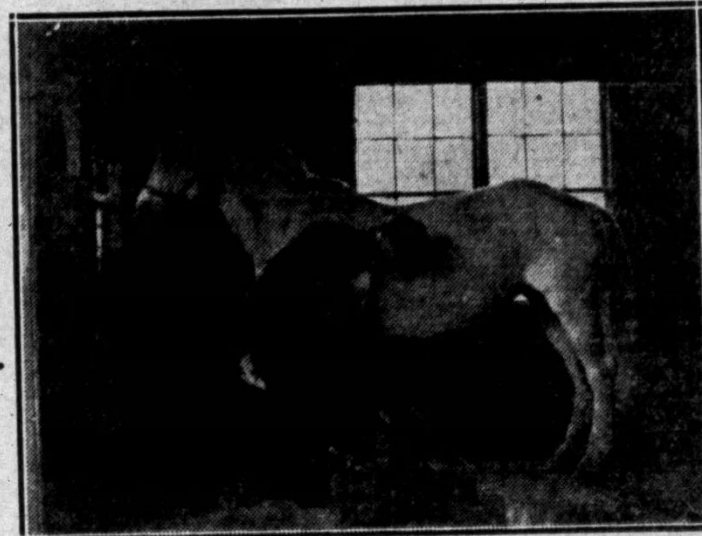
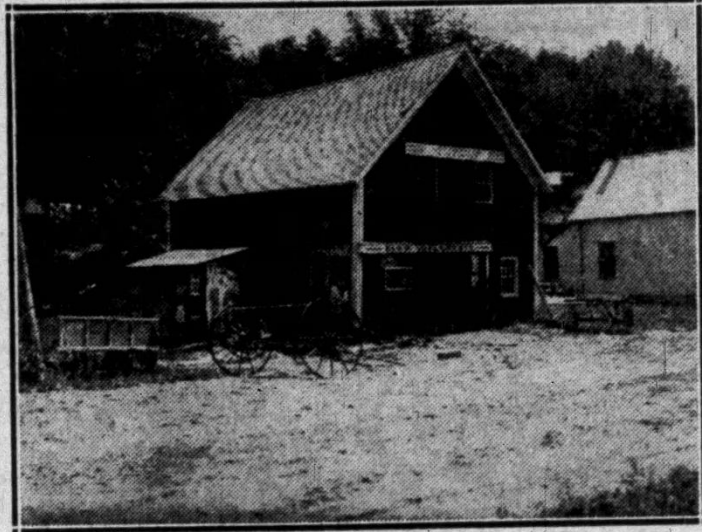
At yesterday's ceremony, a new flag was raised by the town's Leap Year guest, David Spaulding of Norridgewock, a youngster who was born on Feb. 29. Music was furnished by the Norridgewock high school band. Edward E. Roderick of the State Department of Education, and Kermit Nickerson of Oakland, superintendent of schools, made addresses. At the conclusion of the program, souvenirs were presented to all participating in the parade.

From the Waterville Morning Sentinel - August 9, 1940

School Dedication – August 8, 1940



Many Features in Store For Smithfield Centennial



Top—The Old Groves Blacksmith Shop. Bottom, Bert Groves and One of His Customers.

Horse & Ox Pulling and an operating Blacksmith Shop

Horse pulling will be one of the events on Aug. 8 at Smithfield, the first day of the town's Leap Year Jubilee. The 3,000 pound class will be under the direction of an official of the Skowhegan fair and there will be cash purses.

Ox pulling will be held on Aug. 10 under the direction of the same official and the purses will be cash for this event, also. The Centennial Committee would be glad to hear from any who wish to enter.

At the time of the Smithfield fire the old Groves blacksmith shop was one of the few buildings that survived. For many years it has been used for storage purposes but during the Jubilee it will be restored as nearly as possible to its original state as a blacksmith shop.

It is planned to have an expert blacksmith operating the place during the Jubilee and horses-drawing vehicles will be shod free of charge.

From the Waterville Morning Sentinel – August 9, 1940

The results of the horse pulling in the forenoon were as follows: Joe Smith of North Anson, 526 feet; Lindsey Stevens of Smithfield, 446 feet; Leon Witham of Smithfield, 426 feet, seven inches; George Harlow of Norridgewock, 385 feet; and Erving Parlin of New Sharon, 372 feet, seven and one-half inches.

There was a \$100 purse for the horse pulling

Log rolling competition at Sunset Camps



Maine Forest Service exhibit



What a busy Weekend

From the Bangor Daily News – 08/13/1940

Smithfield Leap Year Jubilee
Attracted Many Former Residents

Splendid Programs Featured **Three-day** Event in Busy Town; Winners of the Athletic Events

(Special, to The Bangor Daily News)

NORRIDGEWOCK, Aug. 12—Smithfield's **four days** leap year jubilee and celebration ended Sunday evening. A fine attendance and fair weather favored the event. The opening day included a parade, a farm progress show with the Maine Department of Agriculture exhibit of implements.

The winners of the horse pulling were Joe Smith, Anson, first; Lindsey Stevens, Smithfield, second; Leon Witham, Smithfield, third; George Harlow, Norridgewock, 4th; and Ervin Parlin, New Sharon, fifth.

The dedication of the new school building was by Deputy Commissioner Edward E. Roderick. Members of Fairview Grange were hosts for the day, serving both dinner and supper.

A masquerade roller skate and dance was held in the evening.

The second day the resident guides were hosts at an old fashioned chowder party. There was a live fish and game display by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Game. The woodmen's contest was bucksawing, on a six-inch, dry yellow birch and Chester Berry, Smithfield's sexton, was first, time 14 seconds. Vernon Merrow and Everett Otis tied for second place and when they sawed off the tie, Everett Otis sawed the stick in 9 seconds, taking first place. Wood chopping was Leon Witham, first, time, 18 seconds; second, Everett Otis, 19 seconds; third, Vernon Merrow, 20 seconds.

Rolling pin throwing contest, first, Miss Geraldine Marcue of Norridgewock, distance, 87 feet; second, Miss Minnie Seeley, Fort Fairfield, 85 feet, third, Mrs. Ruth Merrill, 81.8 feet.

Others taking part were Mrs. Edith Tracy, 81.7; Demerise Mosher, 69.6; Miss Beverley Marcue, 68½; Miss Jane Clark Caswell 69½; and Mrs. Gladys Pillsbury, 57.7.

The one mile dash was won by Ralph W. Berard, 5 minutes; second, Walter Carrington; third, Joseph Marchetti, John Reed, fourth; James Allen, fifth; Ralph Marchetti, Jr., sixth and seventh, Richard Dubord.

The girls' potato race was won by Beverly Marcue of Norridgewock and the boys' race by Selden Harlow of Smithfield.

James Allen won the 100 yard dash in 13 seconds. James Allen and Ralph Marchetti, Jr., won the three legged race. The mile relay was won by the team consisting of Walter Carrington, Joseph Marchetti, Lawrence White and Ervin Blaisdell.

The village blacksmith was busy shoeing horses which was an attraction to youngsters, many of whom had never seen a horse shod.

Saturday was the sportsmen show with an exhibit of the Maine Forest Service together with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Horse pulling was again a feature, winners being Lindsey Stevens, 500 feet and 2 inches; Lawrence Stevens 437 feet, 8½ inches; Leon Witham, 321 feet, 8 inches; George Clement, 191 feet, 1 inch.

The Waterville Swimming club, directed by George Gagnon, furnished most of the swimming events including tub tilting, egg and spoon race and firemen's relay. The winners in the aquaplane race were George Flannigan and Daisy Graves. The greased pig was caught by Leroy Merrow and was later caught by Royce O'Donal. The softball game between Ward 5 and Joe Roy's team of Waterville was won by the latter team, 3-2.

Six Old Town Indians put on a varied show consisting of single and double canoe races, gunwale race, wood chopping and sawing, log rolling and canoe tilting. The Somerset County Youth's band under the direction of Rutherford H. Ghen of Skowhegan gave two concerts.

Boat racing was Sunday's big event, with Wallace Sheaff of Norridgewock master of the contests. In the four horse power class, first, William Gousse; second, George Flannigan; third, Robert Hersom. In the final and mixed classes, first, Clint Merry; second, Glen Church; third, James Coyne.

The model airplane meet was held on the schoolhouse ground and was sponsored by Airways, Inc. The ball game between Bill's Beach club and Anson was won by the former, 7-6.

The Oakland band played a concert.

In the evening an old time moving picture was shown by Carlton D. Brown of Waterville. These included the first movie made by Thomas A. Edison.

Charles Greeley, 82, of Portland, whose father and uncle built many of the buildings in Smithfield and operated the factories from which the early town got its name of Greeley's Mills told many interesting things about the earlier days. Many antiques were on display throughout the celebration.

At least they got it right in the article.

Horse Pulling

Blacksmith and Horseshoeing

More Horse Pulling

Swimming Events (including tub tilting, egg & spoon races and a firemen's relay)

Aquaplane Racing

Greased Pig Catching

A Softball Game

Old Town Indians put on a show

Multiple Band Concerts

Motorboat Races

A Model Airplane Meet

A Baseball Game

Old Time Moving Pictures

A visit by Charles Greeley & Antiques on display.

Dinners & Suppers By the Grange all 4 days

Masquerade Roller Skating & a Dance

Old fashioned Chowder Party by local guides

A Woodsmen's Contest

A Rolling Pin Throwing Contest

A One Mile Dash

Potato Races

More foot races including a three-legged race

SOS Sent Out For More Oxen

Smithfield Needs 'Em At Centennial

Special Despatch to The Press Herald

Smithfield, Aug. 8.—Calling all oxen! The committee in charge of the big Smithfield Centennial and Leap Year Jubilee celebration, which started today, is seeking more entries in the two ox pulling events to be staged at 10 o'clock Saturday morning for purses of \$50. The classes will be one event of animals seven feet and under and the sweepstakes.

The program Friday will be in charge of the guides in this region, with a big chowder party in the village at noon.

Saturday there will be a big sportsmen's show with real log rolling, canoe tilting, wood chopping and other events.

Sunday, the final day, will see a water carnival on North Pond.

The whole community is participating in the celebration which is bringing hundreds of folks to Smithfield. It is by far the biggest event ever staged here and the attractions are many and varied.

There Are Always Some Hiccups During Big Events (but not too many)

Six Old Town Indians put on a varied show consisting of single and double canoe races, gunwale race, wood chopping, wood sawing, log rolling, and canoe tilting. The final event which lasted 12 minutes until one team was finally put overboard, was a vigorous battle with several falls and damage to both canoes. The pole men were revived several times by their paddling partners and occasionally were propped up to keep them in the boat.

Morning Sentinel – 8/12/1940

Two Persons Escape as Boat Burns at Smithfield Races

Waterville Girl And
Youth Rescued At
North Pond

Two local persons escaped with minor burns when they leaped into the water from a blazing outboard motor boat at Smithfield yesterday as preparation were being made for a boat race as part of the program observing Smithfield's 100th anniversary.

In the boat when the fire started were Ernest Verzoni and Laura Vigue, young residents of this city. Verzoni, spectators said, pushed the girl into the water, then jumped from the boat himself and aided her to keep afloat until aid was received from persons in other boats which clustered about the burning craft.

The fire started when the flywheel of the motor came free and pierced the boat's gasoline tank over the muffler. The tank blew up and instantly the blaze enveloped the rear end of the boat.

The vessel was considerably damaged by the fire, despite the fact that a fire extinguisher was employed in an attempt to control the blaze.

It was towed to the shore by another boat, Verzoni and Miss Vigue having been pulled into one of the boats near the spot where the fire broke out.

Verzoni was scheduled to enter his boat in one of the races, it was stated. He sustained burns on arms and legs, while Miss Vigue also received minor burns.

Morning Sentinel – 8/12/1940

Portland Press Herald – 8/9/1940

And To Wrap It All Up

Favored with perfect weather, Smithfield's celebration has brought together many old-timers who have reminisced to their heart's content; it has brought to light long-forgotten articles in use a century ago; and has shown that the town has an important place in the history of the state and its progress.

Morning Sentinel – 8/12/1940