

## Historian Hudson recalls humble beginnings

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first Fall Festival was Wilford's Bunyea's traction steam engine, which was parked near the barbecue pits.

Live steam from the engine was used to boil the sweet corn. Shrill blasts from the engine's whistle treated the munching diners to a sound rarely heard since the steam locomotive went the way of the horse and buggy.

That first festival was staged in Kellogg Park on Sunday, Sept. 11, 1960, from 12:30-6 p.m. The city agreed to close Pennington Ave. between Main and Union, but none of the streets were used in those days for setting up booths. Everything was confined to the park itself.

The Rotarians built concrete block bar-

becue pits in the parking lot, owned by Chuck Finlan, next to the Penn Theatre. An "automated" serving line, designed and set up by Frank Arlen, chairman of the event that year, assured diners of hot meals. Picnic tables and chairs were set up in the park which had been colorfully decorated by members of the Rotary Club.

The club's 80 members sold tickets at \$1.50 for adults and \$1 for children (the price in 1979 is \$3.50). The late Ken Harrison, a member of the club, was the top ticket seller that year.

About 3,500 came down to the park that year. The Rotary club served about 2,800 dinners, more than double the number served on any previous occasion. In recent years, the number of dinners served has

been near the 16,000 mark.

The money raised that year, and in every year since, has been donated by the Rotary Club to the Plymouth Rotary Foundation, a non-profit organization whose funds are used in the community for charitable and other worthwhile purposes.

EVENTUALLY, the Rotary Club concluded that the Fall Festival was more than one club could handle.

Other service clubs and organizations were invited to join in the event and a Plymouth Fall Festival Board, encompassing more than Rotary, was formed. Major participating organizations are invited to nominate a member to the board which now numbers 12.

The festival was expanded from the

one-day event to a several day affair with many segments of the community represented.

There is no doubt that, in terms of sheer numbers of people attracted, the Plymouth Fall Festival has far exceeded the expectations of the people who started it.

Not all in the community are pleased, however, with the tone of the Fall Festival in recent years. The Rotary Club, for example, recently passed a resolution against the "noisy, competitive and gaudy" atmosphere that has begun to prevail.

The Club's resolution, which also has been endorsed by the Plymouth Kiwanis Club, has been delivered to the Fall Festival Board for its consideration.

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The late Carl Shear, a Rotarian, enjoys barbecued chicken and sweet corn at the 1962 Fall Festival. Shear was a president of the Plymouth Rotary Club and served on the Plymouth City Commission in the 1920s, '40s, '50s and '60s. He was the Buick dealer in town from 1920, until Jack Selle took over the dealership. Shear died in June 1975 at age 86.

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