

## Centennial Celebration in the Monroe Area

I remember how exciting it was for our country to celebrate the bicentennial in 1976, so I decided to look back at the Monroe Sentinel from 100 years earlier to see how the local communities celebrated the Centennial. I would imagine that people here at that time had known people, maybe their parents or grandparents, who shared what it was like to have lived in this country when it gained its independence. I'll share here how the paper reported it the next day, with much of its interesting wording again.

The hype started with a large ad in the June 14 issue of the Sentinel when it announced that the festivities would start at 10:00 o'clock on the square with a procession to the fairgrounds where the exercises were to begin at 11:00. The fairground stalls were open for free for all teams; ice water was to be provided for everybody. It was to conclude after the fireworks with a grand ball in floral hall.

A short article in the paper on June 21, stated, Mrs. Allen had purchased a fine lot of ladies and misses hats for the Fourth, as well as a good assortment of hats for children. The following week it stated, "The new flags have come and it is proposed that the largest one shall be 'flung to the breeze' from the top of a liberty pole, raised in the public square."

The Centennial was celebrated in Monroe by a "large, respectable, peaceable, good-looking crowd, estimated all the way from 6,000 to 10,000 people. The rain during the night had laid the dust effectually, and purified the air, the day dawned cool, and grew to perfection at noon time, winding up with a thunder storm at 11:30 o'clock in the evening. The procession was over two miles in length, and thousands who did not join the procession were wending their way all the morning to the Fair

Grounds, where the ceremonies were to be held."

The procession to the fairgrounds was formed at 10:00 and headed by Monroe Cornet Band in "their elegant chariot." Possibly because there were so many people, it moved west on 11th Street, then north on 11th Avenue, and finally east on 9th Street to the fairgrounds. The Mammoth Decorated Car filled with young ladies, representing the States and the Goddess of Liberty, was the principal attraction, and the Pioneers' Carriage, the live eagle, and other features of interest were in their places."

A group from Jefferson, "turned out in splendid style, coming with flags, banners, four horse teams and a Martial Band, and took position following the Monroe delegation. Other towns were fully represented, and entered into the spirit of '76 with proper zeal."

The exercises at the stand included an oration by Rev. Sawin, of Janesville, who was a "fine speaker, and a profound thinker and scholar. His oration was listened to with attention and pleasure throughout the vast multitude who were congregated in the bowery constructed for the purpose." The Sentinel said the oration was "the best ever delivered in Green County." After the oration, the bands entertained with soul-stirring music.

After dinner the foot races "elicited much interest and took up nearly as much time as horse races". Clyde Copeland was the victor in the free-to-all foot race. George W. Bloom, of Richland, took the

**CENTENNIAL**  
**GRAND COUNTY**  
**CELEBRATION**

1776- 1876-

TO BE HELD AT  
**Monroe, Wisconsin,**  
ON THE  
**4TH OF JULY**

**COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS:**

GEORGE H. KING,	JAMES H. VANDYKE,
J. S. SMOCK,	FRED WETTENGEL,
JOHN H. STRAWSER,	JEFF. H. WEBER,
J. B. TREAT,	NORM. CHURCHILL,
JOHN BOLENDER,	WM. W. CHADWICK,

This is the top third of an ad that appeared in the June 14, 1876 issue of the Monroe Sentinel. It invites the residents of the county to celebrate the Centennial in Monroe on the 4th of July. Crowds estimated to be between 6,000 and 10,000 were in attendance. Monroe would have had about 3,300 people living here at that time.

purse in the fat man's race. Cecil Copeland, Clyde's brother, won the sack race. A young man named Cullen, from Adams, who ran splendidly, won another foot race in which 13 had started.

Unfortunately, the evening fireworks were not as successful as hoped. Several pieces ordered were not found in Chicago, but that news came too late for the committee to purchase from elsewhere. Fortunately, about \$200 worth of rockets, roman candles, wheels, blue flames, flower pots, and more were discharged, which occupied three hours.

The dance was a success as far as the crowd was concerned. The Agricultural Hall was very large, however, there was not enough room to accommodate all who wanted to dance. Floral Hall had been "given up to the friends from the country, who, being detained by the rain, made their bivouac under its spacious roof. It was filled with men, women and children, who were lucky in finding so good a shelter from the pouring rain, while the teams were sheltered in the stables belonging to the Agricultural Society.

"Notwithstanding the disappointments and drawbacks which always are so unsatisfactory to the committees, who do the work and receive the blame free of charge, in all such affairs, and notwithstanding the threatening weather of the day previous, which interfered with decorations and other preparations, it can truly be said the Centennial Fourth of July was appropriately and largely celebrated in Monroe, and will long be remembered by all who participated."

In relation to the weather that evening, it was reported the following week, "The farm houses along the roads leading into Monroe were thronged with returning celebrators, on the night of the 4th, overtaken by the storm. There was an abundance of dry goods and finery spoiled you may be sure."

It said, in the same paper, that the net proceeds from the Grand Ball in Mechanic's Hall amounted to about \$150, which was turned over to the Green County Agricultural Society.

Monroe wasn't the only community to celebrate the Centennial. Argyle planned something grand with orators, music by the Argyle Brass Band, and Glee Club, a dinner, and fireworks. Postville planned their celebration at Green's Prairie with Martial Music, vocal music, firing of a cannon, speeches, and a general good time. Brodhead also planned a large celebration with the procession lead by the Brodhead Cornet Band.

One can only imagine what it was like for those people to celebrate 100 years of freedom for their country. Some may have known their ancestor who served in the Revolutionary War. I wish each of you a safe, memorable Fourth of July.