

Planning for the Green County Homecoming in 1909

Many of you have probably seen, or possibly even own, a pin with a ribbon from the Green County Homecoming held in Monroe from September 8th through the 11th in 1909. The button has a photo of the old court house that was built in 1845 and a green ribbon hanging from it. This reunion was held in conjunction with the Green County Fair and is the only Green County homecoming I've ever heard about.

Many of the former residents had left the county decades before, many heading west to explore the territories. The first mention of this event was on July 26, when the Monroe Evening Times asked, "Who are they?" This meant that they wanted the former residents to write letters for publication that would include how long they had been gone, what they had been doing since they left, and what would interest them most upon their return. And the Times followed through sharing much information about those who planned to come.

Invitations were sent to those whose addresses were known; by early August the secretaries of the fair and homecoming committee were receiving letters from people who were making plans to visit with old friends. L. L. Lamb, who had been agent of the Illinois Central for a number of years, wrote, "I will always have a warm spot in my heart for my Monroe friends, and give you the assurance that I will be present if nothing prevents." This was probably representative of many letters that were received.

However, Wm. A. Miner of Ridgeway, Missouri wrote a letter that indicated this was "an affair of invitation by the committee" and that those who don't receive a personal invitation might not attend. He suggested the Times include a "general invitation extended to any whose names might not be on the list or addresses known [so] they might arrange to come."

On August 12, the Times printed, "The Green county homecoming and day and night fair will make Monroe the brightest spot in Wisconsin September 8, 9, 10 and 11." There were to be parades, horse and motorcycles races, free attractions and music galore each day. Those from away would make the trip to "renew acquaintances and friendships." The editor felt they would "find it a pleasure to meet and recall their experiences of pioneer days." The newspaper was already printing names of people who would be homeward bound.

Ferd Ingold had a small ad in the paper on August 14 for Monroe Homecoming postcards that had "new ideas, assorted subjects and inscriptions." Four days later, it was reported that people from 21 states were planning to attend and they were expecting to hear from many more. Col. E. O. Kimberly, Janesville, agreed to read his paper, "Reminiscences of by-gone days in Monroe and Green County" and had an appropriate song.

Rev. L. J. Lewis, Fennimore, wrote that he was appointed to the circuit in the county in September 1868, lived in Monroe for two years, and had only visited Monroe once since then. Even though he had been blind for six years at the time of the homecoming, he was planning to attend for a "session of the conference and if health permits we will try to remain in Monroe during part of the homecoming."

Dr. R. Broughton, of Broughton's Sanitarium in Rockford, who had lived in Monroe "before cutting my baby teeth and until less than twenty years ago," also planned to attend.

John F. Lacy wrote from Algona, Iowa that he was a resident of Albany from 1860 to 1883 and anticipated "meeting many old friends and neighbors."



This photo was taken by Ray Horstmeier of his pin and ribbon from the Green County Homecoming. The homecoming was held in Monroe in conjunction with the county fair from September 8 through 11, 1909. It is the only known event of its kind to be held here.

Martin Heinzelman was born and raised here and planned to attend the homecoming after an 18-year absence. He was the park superintendent of Itasca state park, Douglas Lodge, Arago, Minnesota. His wife, also a former resident of Monroe, was to attend as well. He wrote, "I trust you will succeed in getting together a great many old friends."

The Illinois Central had consigned 18 additional passenger coaches for the event. The order was given for 12 coaches from Warren on Friday and Saturday plus three extras assigned to both regular passenger trains. The fair officers knew they would have an unusually large crowd, so they appropriated for an extra five free attractions to appear both day and night. Big Otto's Animal Show included "a menagerie of the wild and ferocious beasts from all countries of the globe. This alone is worth the price of admission."

A parade was planned for Thursday and Friday with four trophies being given for the best decorated floats. Trophies would go to "the best float illustrative of some place, business, or industry; one for the most attractive vehicle other than automobile; and one for the most attractive child's outfit."

A message from William Corson of Canton, South Dakota was included in the Times of August 24. He hoped to be here for the homecoming, but if he wasn't able to attend, he sent greetings "to all friends as he says he has a longing for the old stamping ground." J. F. Lacy planned on "visiting the old scenes and mingling with the friends of his youth" for 10 days.

A family dinner was planned and Mr. Gloege planned to photograph family groups. "If you know how families value a photograph of the family group after one of the number had departed this life, you would not hesitate a moment to get a photograph of your family. If you knew the regrets that are expressed to us at 'not having been able to get together' until it was for the funeral of a member of the family, you would 'take time' and 'get together' at once." Gloege's studio was only to be open in the forenoons during the fair.

The paper announced on September 2 that the home comers were "headed this way." The first had already arrived with hundreds being homeward bound in the following week.