

Stalwart Fair Marks 100 Years of Celebrating Community's Rural Culture

Focus This Year Placed on Area History, But Old Photographs Prove Hard To Come By, as Few in This Farming Community Could Buy a Camera Years Ago

By Amy Polk

Stalwart's Centennial Fair lived up to its name this weekend, September 8 through September 11, serving as the last tangible reminder of a town given a name that means "strong, sturdy, resolute, and firm." The town store and post office closed years ago, but homes and farms still pepper the countryside that meant a new beginning for the area's first Scottish and Canadian settlers. According to historic accounts, the first handful of settlers came to Stalwart in the summer of 1878 by way of Pickford. They cut a trail through the woods to get there, established homesteads, farms, and the post office that bore the name of the town until 1995. The Hanna family reported getting household goods by way of the Prentiss Bay trail that extended south from Stalwart, to a bay near Cedarville where goods were shipped. The trail has become Prentiss Bay Road, but is still not much more than a gravel two-track that winds through thick woods.

The fair was established 27 years after the first homesteaders settled, giving residents of the independent community a place to show off their skills in the field, garden, and home. Residents in the first few years walked, rode horses, or came by horse and buggy or wagon to the Orange Hall, where the former Stalwart Grange organized the modest event. Events were added and the fair grew to such proportions that the Grange Society turned the reins over to the new Stalwart Agricultural Society, which was organized between 1909 and 1911. Raber, Pickford, and DeTour townships in Chippewa County, and Clark Township in Mackinac County were included in the Stalwart Agricultural Society's coverage area. The existing fairgrounds, racetrack, and buildings were purchased and constructed between 1916 and 1930. A dining hall was built to accommodate up to 30 people and the kitchen that fed fairgoers. Electricity came to the fairgrounds in 1938. The fair was moved from October to mid-September, then to earlier in

September. It is now held the second weekend in September. When searching for historic images for the Stalwart Fair Centennial booklet, the Pickford Area Preservationists came across few photographs. Preservationist Mary Jane Pennington said few people could afford cameras in the first 50 years or so of the fair, but the precious few images they have show fairgrounds that look much the same as today. The photographs they found, including historic horsepulling images, were displayed at the fairgrounds Friday and Saturday.

The area's connection to horses persists through modern fairs, where old fashioned horse and pony pulls continue alongside



An old image of the Stalwart Fairgrounds in the 1930s or 1940s shows the old dining hall on the grounds that used to seat 30 people at the annual fair dinner. The exhibit hall can be seen at the left of the dining hall, where people are gathered around an automobile. (Photograph courtesy of the Pickford Area Preservationists)

newer speed and action contests. A growing interest in horsemanship among children and teens, and their involvement with the Eastern Upper Peninsula Horse Association, gives a boost to the horse competitions, which continue through Sunday afternoon, after the Fair.

Rain Saturday, September 10, shut down some of the events on the Fair's biggest day. An exhibit of antique machinery by members of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Antique Equipment Association



Early Stalwart Fair spectators include local residents and descendants of the Fair's founders, (from left) Beatrice (Morrison) Lawfkin, Emily (Sims) Kinnee, Margaret (McLeod) Chown, and Sue (Crawford) Hewer. The date of the photograph is unknown, but is estimated to be sometime between the 1920s and 1940s. (Photograph courtesy Pickford Area Preservationists)

was covered most of the day, but was revealed late in the afternoon, once skies cleared. Two of the youngest exhibitors, Travis and Tyler Rye of Pickford, attracted quite a bit of attention showing their engines to a group of interested friends. The 10-year-old brothers bought their engines with money from selling livestock, they said, and they have learned to maintain and operate the machines themselves. They exhibited engines from the 1930s to 1940s that were used to power washing machines and a water pump. Both boys said they have another three engines each at home, and this is the first year they have exhibited. They also pulled in the youth lawn and garden tractor pull, another event hosted by the Antique Equipment Association. Tyler Rye has two tractors and Travis Rye

has one, but plans to have three by next year.

The Stalwart horsepulls always fill the stands, and heavyweight pull rounded out activities Saturday afternoon. Many, if not all, of the local pullers are members of the 141-member Michigan Horsepulling Boat Association, which endorses 41 horsepulling events around the state, including four in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. Members travel around the state to attend pulls like the ones here, and member Mary Kay Darnell estimated that puller Duane Lowe of Vermontville probably traveled the farthest, about 400 miles, to participate in the Stalwart pull. She speculated that the price of gasoline this year may have deterred other pullers, who have numbered as many as 16 in the past.

St. Ignace Autumn Apple Days Planned for Sept. 30, Oct. 1

To Include Pumpkin Roll, Hay Rides, Open House

The St. Ignace Autumn Apple Days and The Great Pumpkin Roll are scheduled for Friday, September 30, and Saturday, October 1. Carnival games and the LaSalle High School Saints homecoming parade will begin the events Friday.

On Saturday, a "Pumpkin Patch" sale, free hay rides, contests, and a PTO bake sale are planned.

There will be an open house Saturday at the St. Ignace Fire Department for Fire Prevention Week. The St. Ignace Fire Department will accept donations of non-perishable food during the Open House to be distributed to Hurricane Katrina survivors.

A Karaoke contest will be sponsored by G & M Adventures.

Registration is required for participation in The Great Pumpkin Roll, and "rolling pumpkins" will

be available for \$1. Prizes will be awarded, and all ages are welcome.

Participants can build a scarecrow for the contest in the business district. Participants must hang their own scarecrows. Contestants should confirm participation by calling the Chamber of Commerce office at 643-8717 no later than Friday, September 16.

This year pumpkins will be decorated by classes at local schools. Each pumpkin will be displayed for judging in a downtown business the week prior to the events. Judging will be done by dropping coins into a container. The pumpkin with the most change wins, and a prize will be given to the winning class. The remaining funds will be donated to a charity for Hurricane Katrina survivors.

Nothing Taken in Bank Break In

Michigan State Police are investigating a breaking and entering at the First National Bank of St. Ignace, Les Cheneaux Branch in Cedarville. The incident happened sometime between 6 p.m. Tuesday, September 6, and 8 a.m. Wednesday, September 7. No suspects have been identified yet.

Police were alerted to the incident after a cleaning person discov-

ered a broken window in the branch manager's office on the north side of the building on Meridian Street. According to bank workers and First National Bank President Jim North, the investigation revealed that someone apparently entered the building, but did not take anything. The incident is being regarded as "a breaking and entering," Mr. North said.



Travis Rye (left) and his brother, Tyler, start antique engines for spectators at the Stalwart Fair Saturday, September 10. Both boys attend Pickford Public Schools.

Over at Stalwart Presbyterian Church, volunteers marked their biggest year, serving turkey and ham dinner to 1,000 people in the church's new Fellowship Hall Friday and Saturday. Members wondered whether it was the Centennial or the rain that pushed the usual amount of 300 past the usual amount of 600 to 700 served.

The Stalwart Fair ended Sunday morning, September 11, with the 13th Annual Stalwart

Presbyterian Church's outdoor service.

A list of winners in some of the fair's events follows:

Horse Show Trophy Winners

The Stalwart Fair Horse Show was Friday morning, September 9. Results in the various show categories follow.

Best Horse Under Saddle - Sharolyn Reed; Best Team - George Davis; Best Four-Year-Old Mare or Gelding - Callie Smith.

*Please turn to page 12

Roseway Completes Sailing Season at St. Ignace Harbor

The schooner *Roseway* completed its last day of sailing from the St. Ignace harbor for the season Monday, September 5.

The 137-foot, wooden, two-masted ship and its crew from the World Ocean School of Camden, Maine, traveled 2,000 miles through the St. Lawrence Seaway and Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and Lake Huron to arrive in St. Ignace in mid-June. The ship offered day sails from St. Ignace this summer.

The St. Ignace day sailing project enjoyed a good season in its first year, said David Swope of St. Ignace Hospitality Growth, the group that launched the program.

"We had really good support from around town, and those who sailed with the *Roseway* really enjoyed the experience," Mr. Swope said. Hospitality Growth is seeking a similar ship to offer day

sails next summer, he said, as a return trip to St. Ignace would not fit the mission of the *Roseway's* owner, World Ocean School, which prefers to focus on using the ship as an educational platform for its programs.

Mr. Swope pointed out that the local group was satisfied with the first season's results, and building a strong sailing program from the St. Ignace harbor will be an ongoing project for St. Ignace Hospitality Growth.

"It will take a few years to build this up," he said. "We can't expect in its first year that it will just explode."

The *Roseway*, built in 1925, is a National Historic Landmark. It was first built to be a private fishing vessel, but has been used as a yacht, a pilot boat, a Coast Guard Reserve patrol vessel during World War II, and a windjammer.

Reward Offered in Destruction of Bridge Painting Equipment

Damage was done to high pressure hoses belonging to American Painting Company, which is working on projects on the Mackinac Bridge, on or about Thursday, September 8, leading to thousands of dollars of damage and job time lost. A \$10,000 reward is offered by the company for the arrest and conviction of those responsible.

Equipment was in a parking storage yard behind the Shell gas station on US-2 and Service Road, next to I-75, in St. Ignace.

Approximately 6,200 feet of high pressure hose was destroyed

by someone drilling holes in it. Workers said these holes could have created a dangerous situation if the hoses had been put into use by maintenance workers sand blasting on the Mackinac Bridge.

The sand hopper was also compromised by someone putting chunks of stone in the sand. The sand was watered down, which makes it unusable for sand blasting.

Anyone having information concerning this incident is asked to call the Mackinac County Sheriff Department at (800) 643-1911.

Walkers To Raise Funds for Hunger Relief in 14th Crop Walk

Money will be raised for hungry people in Mackinac County and across the world at the 14th Annual Crop Walk at St. Ignace Sunday, September 18. Walkers will gather at St. Ignace United Methodist Church at 1 p.m. and return to the church for refreshments following the walk.

Those who wish to participate may call Mary Lou Krause of St. Ignace for a sponsorship packet, or may contact any local church. Walkers take pledges for Church World Service through the event,

which raises money for food banks. "The money goes to feed people in countries who need it, and 25 percent of the money raised will be returned to the community through the St. Ignace Food Pantry," said Mrs. Krause, an organizer of the event.

More than \$4,000 was raised by walkers last year.

Along the route, a driver will be available for transportation for anyone who does not wish to complete the full four miles of the route.

Griffin Beverage's Addition Request Denied by ZBA

By Ryan Schlehuber

Griffin Beverage Company in St. Ignace has been denied a variance to expand its warehouse on Reagon Street. The company's plan did not receive the required two-thirds vote from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for a variance at a ZBA meeting Wednesday, September 7. The company, in an industrial zone, had asked to reduce a required west side setback from 25 feet to 10 feet and a north side setback from 50 feet to 10 feet.

The seven-member board voted 4-3 to approve the variance, however, five votes were needed to meet the two-thirds variance requirement, thus the request was denied.

Griffin Beverage was asking for a building permit to construct a 107-foot by 75-foot addition to the building. Its west side setback, which abuts The St. Ignace News building, is required between structures in an industrial zone and the 50-foot setback on its north side is required because it abuts a residential area, in this case, Gary Nitz's property, formerly the home of Ray and Marilyn Wilkins.

Mike Kamyszek, Griffin Beverage's warehouse manager, said the company purchased a soft drink distribution route and added more products to its business and needs more space to store it.

ZBA members Dean Baker, Tom Hamel, and Ken Hardy voted against the request.

Nearby property owners said they had no objection to the requested variance. Mr. Nitz asked the company to provide a tree barrier to hide the steel facade planned for the warehouse extension.

At one point, the board considered asking the Planning

Commission to rezone the street from Industrial to Commercial, which would allow owner Bob Griffin to build 15 feet back from the residential lot and abut the St. Ignace News property line on the west.

Mr. Baker said he was still concerned with the short setback and said the city needed to enforce its zoning or change it so that variances are not required.

"We've been through this with others who were asking for smaller distances than that and we've denied them," Mr. Baker said. "I'd be willing to go along with this with a barrier in place and if you moved the wall in five feet," which would conform to the 15-foot setback requirement of a commercial lot.

But Mr. Griffin said, even if the lot were rezoned commercial, he would still ask for a 10-foot setback from the residential lot, because without it, he would lose more than 500 square feet of his addition, which would make the cost for such a project undesirable.

Mr. Kamyszek said the business has an alternative site it can use, outside the city limits, however, building an addition to the existing warehouse would be less expensive. For the time being, he said, the company will not pursue the rezoning option.

"For now," he said, "we're going to stay the way we are now."

The zoning board is not sure why the property on Reagon Street is zoned Industrial, but Planning Commission Chairman Art Underwood, who attending the meeting, said he believes it may date to the old railroad spur that was routed from the north switching yard (now the site of Little Bear East Arena) to the Mill Slip.