

CHAPTER XXIII

THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY

Towns like people have birthdays and anniversaries but those of the former are measured in terms of quarter and half centuries. In 1873 Jaffrey observed its Centennial and in 1923 its Sesquicentennial anniversaries, both appropriately celebrated. (See Vol. I.) In August, 1948, the 175th anniversary celebration took place.

With minds focused ahead on a more ambitious celebration in 1973 on the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of the incorporation of the town, Jaffrey could not let the 175th anniversary, as a milestone in its history, pass unobserved. The idea of a celebration first came to a group of citizens at a time when it was too late to bring the matter before the voters at the annual town meeting in March. There remained one thing to do: To ascertain the consensus of the townspeople in regard to such a celebration.

A community meeting was held in Firemen's Hall on the evening of May 24th, over which Charles F. Hart, president of the Jaffrey Outing Club, presided. Preliminary plans to hold a celebration were made and Alice E. E. Lehtinen was chosen general chairman for the event. Helen M. Adams was named clerk and, with Ferdinand Gordon and Carl A. Butler, a committee to publicize the event.

The celebration was held during the weekend of August 20 to 22, with events scheduled for each day. It was a perfect weekend weatherwise. The festivities opened Friday afternoon with a tea and reception held by the Village Improvement Society from two to five o'clock in the Old Meeting House at Jaffrey Center. During the afternoon Melville Academy was opened to the public with many persons visiting the old schoolhouse and its museum of relics of bygone days in Jaffrey. Many of the fine old homes opened their doors to the public during the afternoon.

On Friday evening the Amos Fortune Forum had as its rival a gala anniversary ball in Union Hall with Willy Letourneau's orchestra providing the music.

Saturday, August 21st, was the big day. At nine o'clock that morning a colorful parade assembled at the American Legion Hall and the village streets became scenes of lively activity. It was estimated that probably as many as five thousand persons were on hand to witness the event. Floats were entered by the civic and fraternal organizations, and by businessmen and individuals. The

parade was in four divisions: Civic, industrial, historical, and individual. Particular emphasis was placed on the children's part in the anniversary as they would be the ones planning the bi-centennial in 1973. The children's part of the parade consisted of decorated doll carriages and bicycles, a mock wedding, and a toy band, arranged by Mrs. Dorothy Nute and Mrs. Bernice Deschenes. Four out-of-town bands participated in the long parade procession: The Murdock High School Band of Winchendon, Massachusetts, the Florence Band of Gardner, Massachusetts, the Simplex Time Recorder Band, also of Gardner, and the Red Men's Band of Manchester, New Hampshire.

The parade route was along Peterborough Street to Main Street, then east on Turnpike to Baptist Common, to Stratton Road, then down Main Street to River Street to Charlonne Street, then north to Main Street and down the business section by the reviewing stand between the Common and War Memorial, thence returning to Legion Hall by way of Turnpike and Oak Street.

After the parade the scene shifted to the historical program at the judges' reviewing stand. Welcoming remarks were made by Miss Lehtinen, who introduced the participants: Delcie D. Bean who made appropriate remarks; Douglas Sloane, of the Cathedral of the Pines, who awarded the prizes; State Senator Jason C. Sawyer who addressed the crowd on the growth of the town; and V.F.W. Department Commander Raymond Chase of Dover, N. H., who presented the local unit with a plaque for its community service. Invocation was by Rev. Roger W. Floyd. Besides Mr. Sloane, the judges were Joan Marean, Alice Draper, George B. Farnham. Working with chairman Andrew Bussiere on the parade committee were Louis Rondina, George Robinson, Charles F. Hart, George McInnis, Mrs. Nute and Mrs. Deschenes.

Other features that day included two afternoon ball games at Humiston Field, and a softball game in the evening. A water carnival for the children was held at Contoocook Lake with the playground supervisor Walter Simcock and Fletcher Taft in charge.

A band concert was held in the evening on the common. United States Representative Sherman Adams of Lincoln, N. H., was the evening speaker and centered his address on the town, its leading figures, and memorable events. Two dances, a square dance in the Old Meeting House and a modern dance in Union Hall, wound up the day's program. A music committee consisted of Hubert S. O'Neil, Emerson Williams, and Wilfred Letourneau.