

Alexandria Bay Centennial Celebration 1836-1936

09/07/22

I never know from week to week what my next topic will be for this column. I know that by Tuesday, before the Thursday deadline, someone will call, stop by, or make a comment that will start a new story for me to tell you. This week it was a visit to the museum. A handsome gentleman came in and said loudly "Which one of you is Teri Bruno?" My immediate thought was, oh boy, what did I do now?? It turns out the gentleman was a local who I had not met, but had wanted to meet. He knew my grandfather and parents and was bringing me my next article! He said, I had this in the drawer and thought you would like to see it. Boy was he right!

He loaned to me a 6x8 inch original paper copy of the 1836 to 1936 Centennial Celebration for Alexandria Bay. The celebration was from August 9th to the 16th, 1936. It has advertising for all of the businesses at that time (another story), photos of the important men of those times and a descriptive history of Alexandria Bay from the Prehistoric times, to the First White Men through the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War and the Patriot's War. It covers the original ownership of the thousand islands and establishment of Alexandria Bay.

Today I will tell you about the actual Centennial Celebration and the events that occurred.

On Sunday August 9, 1936 the ceremonies were opened at the front dock at 2pm. The opening address was given by Dr H.L. Gokey, mayor of the village. Also speaking were Perley Pitcher, State Senator from Watertown, NY, W Allan Newall, Member of Assembly, Ogdensburg, NY, Francis D Culking, Member of Congress, Oswego, NY and James M Thomas, president of Clarkson Memorial College, Potsdam, NY.. George Radley is listed as the General Chairman.

At 3pm, still at the front dock, there was a Historical Pageant re-enacting 6 previous events in the history of the village.

1. Hiawatha appearing to the Iroquois Tribes in the 1000 Islands region
2. Father LeMoyne, Jesuit missionary traveling up the St Lawrence in July 1654, the first white man to visit this section of the St Lawrence River.
3. Count De Frontenac and his invasion of the Iroquois in 1696
4. A re-enactment of British scouts encountering French scouts during the French and Indian War
5. Bill Johnson, the admiral of the 1000 Islands during the Patriot's war in 1838
6. General U.S. Grant, then president, visiting in 1872

Following the pageant there were motorboat races at 4pm.

On Monday, August 10th the celebration was called OLD RESIDENTS DAY. All events were in the afternoon. At 2:30 was a baseball game at the high school athletic field. At 6pm was a basket picnic at Edward J Noble Park, and at 8:30 was a reception and dance at Convention Hall.

Tuesday the 11th was NORTHERN NEW YORK DAY. At 2pm was the Adirondack Championship 10-mile Marathon run at Edgewood Track, Northern New York Track and Field Championships. In the evening, All Star Boxing Bouts were held at Convention Hall beginning at 8:30pm

Wednesday the 12th there were no activities scheduled.

Thursday the 13th was FIREMENS FIELD DAY. 10 departments from northern New York participated, Norwood, Tupper Lake, Cape Vincent, Clayton, Lowville, Norfolk, Gouverneur, Massena, Carthage, and West Carthage. There were 6 divisions of competition including Individual Ladder Race, Equipment Contest, Motor Hook and Ladder (2 divisions) and Motor Hose (2 divisions). Melvin Merrill was the General Chairman of the Tournament Committee and Raymond Rogers was the Chief of the Alexandria Bay Fire Department. No start time was noted.

Friday the 14th was the WATER CARNIVAL which was held at Crossmon Bay. At 11am the LONG DISTANCE SWIM started. This was a swim from Alexandria Bay to Rockport, Ontario and back. First Prize was \$100.00 and Second Prize was \$50.00. No other carnival activities are mentioned but the Combined Tours was offering special rates to watch from one of their boats.

Saturday the 15th, the last day, was the 75 MILE AUTOMOBILE RACE held at 2pm. This was the first ROUND THE HOUSES RACE. The route was, Bolton to Church, to Fuller, to Market, to Walton and back to Bolton. There are 6 drivers listed and lines for additions to the list. The drivers listed are Thomas Dewart, M. Collier, B. Cunningham, Mr. Collier Jr, H. Bancroft, R. Oliver. Saturday evening featured CASINO NIGHT AND FASHION SHOW at Convention Hall 8:30 pm. Admission was .10 cents.

There are so many questions that come to mind about these events. One of my first questions is who won? Who was the fastest runner? The fastest swimmer? The fastest racer? The winning boxer? Do any family members remember an ancestor participating in any of these competitions? I also am amazed that someone could swim to Rockport and back. This, of course, was before the St Lawrence Seaway opened, but there still must have been a current to fight. One other thought came to mind while reading the schedule. All the events were held in the afternoons. I am imagining this was to allow people to finish their daily chores and then take the afternoon off for entertainment.

What other questions come to mind? I would love some feedback. Email info@alexandriahistorical.com or call the museum at 315-482-4586.