

Old Settlers' Days Were Really Big Events

FIRST OLD SETTLERS REUNION OF LOGAN COUNTY HELD HERE IN 1873

Noted Speakers Appeared Here At Capps Park

(Sept. 5, 1957)
By Paul E. Beidler

The fact that the revived Logan County Old Settlers' Ass'n. reunion will be held in Mount Pulaski on Friday afternoon, Sept. 6, 1957, in connection with the Fall Festival, it will be interesting to readers to know what information appeared on a hand bill 84 years ago, advertising the first reunion ever held by the association. Following is what was on the bill:

OLD SETTLERS' REUNION

"The Old Settlers' of Logan and adjoining counties, will hold their First Annual Reunion in Capps' Park, Mt. Pulaski, on Wednesday, Oct. 1, 1873.

"The object is to revive the memory of old associations and perpetuate the past by gathering together the Pioneer, and Early Settlers, and enjoy a Feast after the old time styles. All from far and near are cordially invited to attend, especially the Old Settlers and their wives.

"Bring your baskets well-filled and make it a day of feasting and sociability. Water in abundance, will be furnished on the grounds. Among the invited guests who are expected to address the meeting, are:

Senator Richard J. Oglesby
Governor Beveridge
Ex-Governor Palmer
Hon. C. H. Moore
Hon. John T. Stuart
Col. Latham
Judge S. C. Sparks.

Committee of general arrangements: Hon. C. W. Clark, Charles S. Capps, John D. Gillett, William Donnan, J. T. Hackney, Sorrell Doten, John Buckles, John Scroggin, Judge Alex Fisher, Christian Danner, Baldwin Harper, Miller Copeland, Rev. John England, L. K. Scroggin, W. Skinner, J. E. Loughry, James Downing, C. W. Clark, chairman.

S. Linn Beidler, secretary.

Expect to get Excursion Rates on railroads."

Editor's Note: To give you an idea about the railroads, the Gilman & Springfield Railroad, and the P.D. & E. railroad, had been in operation not more than one year. Prior to that Mount Pulaski was an inland town.

Another Reunion In 1894

The old Mount Pulaski News, in a 4-column article, told about the reunion held Wednesday, Sept. 19, 1894. At this time only the two first paragraphs will be reprinted here:

"Again has Mt. Pulaski distinguished herself as an entertainer of immense crowds, and

OLD SETTLERS MEETINGS 1873-1894

First meeting of Logan County Old Settlers Association was held Oct. 1, 1873 in Mount Pulaski.

Second reunion at Capps Park in Mount Pulaski Oct. 1, 1874.

Third meeting at Salt Creek bridge, three miles north of Mt. Pulaski on Sept. 23, 1875.

Fourth reunion was held at the courthouse in Lincoln on Oct. 10, 1876.

Fifth reunion was in Gillett's Hall in Lincoln on Sept. 12, 1877.

Sixth reunion at Lincoln courthouse Sept. 12, 1878.

Seventh reunion at Lincoln Sept. 10, 1879.

Eighth reunion at Mount Pulaski on Aug. 12, 1880.

Ninth reunion at Atlanta Fairgrounds on Sept. 6, 1881.

Tenth reunion in Mount Pulaski, Sept. 13, 1882, was the largest ever held, 15,000 being present.

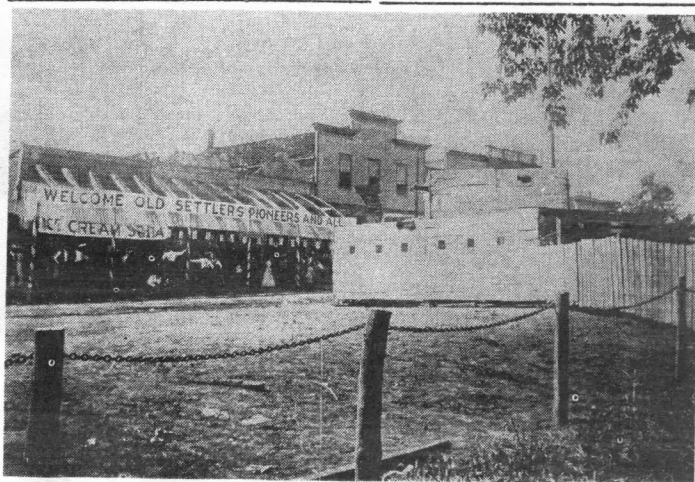
Eleventh and Twelfth reunion were held in Mount Pulaski Sept. 12 and 19, 1883 - 1884.

The thirteenth, fourteenth and sixteenth, eighteenth and twentieth reunions were held in Lincoln.

The fifteenth, nineteenth and twenty-first were in Mount Pulaski. The twenty-second was held here on Sept. 18, 1894, when Lincoln only put up \$125 for entertainment while Mount Pulaski raised \$400.

for the whole-souled and fitting tribute she has once more laid at the feet of pioneer man and womanhood. Ever since the time and place were announced there has been a feeling that the Old Settlers' Reunion of 1894 would be one of the notable events in the history of the association and the meeting more than fulfilled this prophetic feeling.

"Wednesday came with ideal weather for an outdoor gathering—bright sunshine, cool enough for comfort, and no dust worth mentioning. The city was in its gayest garb, flags, banners, and bunting fluttering from nearly all buildings. At 7:45 a.m. the reception committee in carriages, headed by the Mt. Pulaski band, met the first incoming train on the P D & E, bringing delegates from Decatur, Warrensburg and Latham, including Hon. Wm. M. Springer, one of the orators of the day. Later trains and other conveyances poured people into the city until 10,000 became a conservative estimate. Our galaxy of speakers embraced, besides Congressman Springer, Maj. James A. Connelly, Gen. John A. McClernand, Rolla W. Diller, W. T. Baker, Hon. Joe A. Horn, and Elder L. M. Robinson.



THIS FORT, a replica of the Spanish War period, was erected on the west side of the square during of the first Old Settlers meetings. As a feature of the occasion the National Guard from Springfield disembarking from their train at the depot at the foot of the hill, came up South Washington Street and made a sham attack on the fort, which was a thrilling event for the huge throng assembled. Notice the hitch racks which have long since disappeared.

SIXTH ANNUAL OLD SETTLERS HELD IN LINCOLN SEPT. 12, 1878

At the sixth reunion held at the Courthouse in Lincoln, on Sept. 12, 1878, the following letter written by Charles S. Capps, of Mount Pulaski, and giving interesting glimpses of the early history of that thriving town, was read by Captain Fisk:

"Jabez Capps was born in London, England, 82 years ago and came to America in 1817. In the fall of 1818, he and his brother, Ebenezer walked from Louisville, Ky., to St. Louis, Mo., where they remained during the winter and in the spring of 1819, they walked to Sangamon county, Ill. Jabez Capps taught the first school ever taught in that county, on the south fork of Sangamon River, in 1820; he also taught the first school in Springfield, in the old log courthouse. He was one of the first settlers in Springfield, then called Calhoun.

"I was born in Springfield in January 1830, and have (with the exception of one summer spent in Europe) passed my whole life in Central Illinois. I have had good opportunities of knowing something of pioneer life; but being entirely unaccustomed to public speaking, I think I can express myself better and make my remarks more interesting by making a few notes from memory. My earliest recollections are of my father's, Jabez Capps pioneer store, at Springfield, where he used to dispense goods, both wet and dry (as was the custom of the times), to the early settlers and to the Indians in exchange for peltries, etc.

"In the year 1836, he moved with his family, to Mt. Pulaski, where he was the first and, in fact, for several months, the only

settler. He had built a long cabin on the site of the present post office building, and put in a small stock of goods; the cabin, when I first saw it, was not, chinked and daubed (i.e. the cracks between the logs were open) and as he lacked clap boards enough to cover the roof, there was a space about a yard square left open. My uncle, John Stafford, and I were left in charge of the store.

Prairie grass was cut in front of the store and placed in a heap on the floor, and this with some blankets constituted our bed. There came up a storm one night which wet us thoroughly. Our cooking, until mother came, was done in a sand hole over which some lumber was put to season; this sand hole had formerly been a wolf den. We toasted our bacon by putting it on the end of a sharp stick and holding it over the fire.

"Our nearest neighbor lived two and a half miles north on Salt Creek. My father had a sugar hogshead which he used as a smoke-house. One night a pack of wolves, smelling the meat, gathered around the smoke-house and howled for several hours. A family of skunks took up their quarters under the house and were quite tame; they were finally trapped and killed, although I do not think they deserved their fate, as they seemed quite harmless.

Rattlesnake in Kitchen

"I remember seeing mother sweeping the floor one day; she stooped hastily to pick up what she thought was a calico apron, but which, on closer inspection, proved to be a large rattlesnake

coiled. She dispatched it speedily with the broom handle.

"A cabin was afterward erected on the side of the square by Jerry Birks, in which he lived for a short time. One night when father was away from home, a prairie fire ran through the town and set fire to the cabin. Mother had considerable difficulty in saving the city, there being no fire company organized, and no water nearer than the spring, a quarter of a mile away. The fire consumed our haystack, which was on a platform on forks 6 or 7 feet high.

"People lived in a very primitive manner in those times. The clothing was mostly home-spun and home-made; instead of coats we had 'hunting shirts and warmuses', as they were called, a kind of loose blouse made of homemade jeans or linsey. Many of the farmers made their own shoes, and did their own cobbling. The women and children were clothed mostly in home-made linsey and flannel; a few had calico dresses made as narrow as the 'pull backs' of the present day, for in those times six yards was all that we required for a lady's dress. Sun-bonnets made of calico and pasteboard were the prevailing head-dress. Shoes were rarely used in summer except to wear to meetings or a visiting.

"The cooking was done in a fireplace, there being no such thing as stoves in use then. An iron crane set in the side of the chimney and provided with hooks for suspending kettles, etc. was made so as to swing out over the hearth and back over the fire. Bread, cakes and pies were baked in iron ovens with legs to give room for coals beneath, and a lid with a rim to hold the coals on top; this with a skillet for frying meat, a dinner pot and a tea kettle, constituted the outfit of our mothers for cooking.

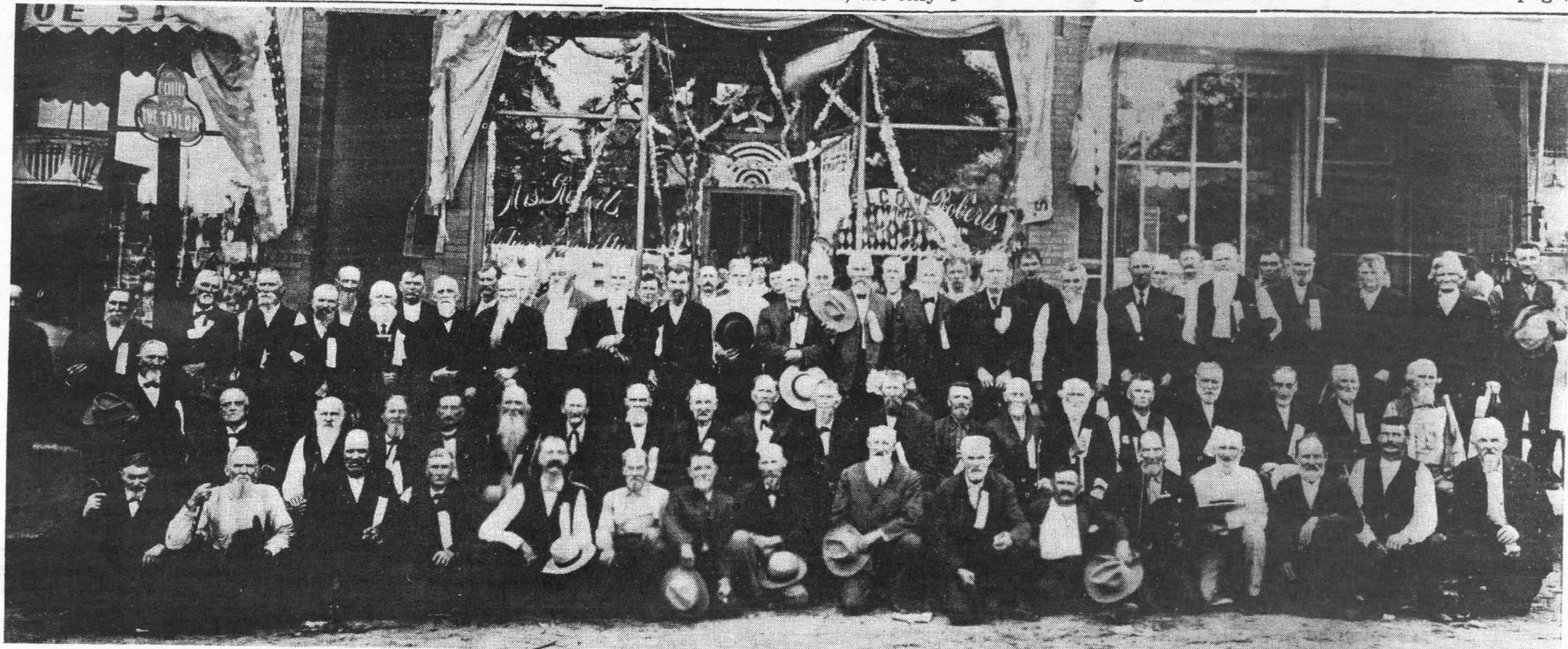
Quails 25c A Dozen

"Game was plentiful and cheap. We used to pay 25 cents per dozen for quails; 75 cents per dozen for prairie chickens, and 50 cents to \$1 for a saddle of venison—the hind half of a deer. I boarded with a family one term of school whose daily bill of fare was corn dodgers without butter, fat bacon fried in grease, and rye coffee minus the sugar, but we had good appetites and enjoyed it.

"Brush College"

"By the way, I will try to describe our school house; it was called 'Brush College'; our worthy chairman will recollect it well. It was a most primitive structure, not a particle of iron or glass or sawed lumber used in its construction; it was built of logs with the cracks daubed in mud; the roof was of clapboards kept in place by weight poles, which were pinned fast to the

(Continued on next page)



OLD SETTLERS WHO ATTENDED THE 1907 OLD SETTLERS REUNION in Mount Pulaski are shown in this picture taken on the west side of the square.

Wish we had one of those nice white beards to display during the Sil-Tennial year.