

A Salute to Highland Day: Ten Years and Counting

Heigh-ho! Come to the fair!

The sun is ashining to welcome the day,

All the stalls on the green are as fine as can be!

With trinkets and tokens so pretty to see,

So it's come then, maidens and men,

To the fair in the pride of the morning.

When Helen Taylor composed these lyrics in 1917, she might well have been describing the look and feel of the earliest Highland Day observances. The date of the first Highland Day is much debated, but life-long resident, Millie Gallis, recalls a fall festival, celebrating the harvest just winding up at the farms surrounding the crossroads. There were games, prizes for jams, pickles, preserves, pies and other delicacies put up by local women, perhaps a horse pull and then a dinner and dance. It was a time for hard-earned relaxation and a gathering together of a community taking pride in what it did well. Women prepared a feast behind Rannie's store (now **Boarman's Country Market**) using foods raised locally. The dance took place at The Lyceum, later known as the Grange, which now houses **Highland Feed and Seed**. Mrs. Gallis fondly recalls the tale of ancestor Joshua Disney, who lived in the log cabin across from the Grange. He grew weary of people tying horses to his fence while attending the dances so prepared a concoction of contents from chamber pots and spread it along the fence. When ladies' long skirts swept through this mess the dance was less than pleasant. His fence ceased to serve as a hitching post.

The fiddles are playing the tune that you know:

"Heigh-ho! come to the fair!"

The drums are all beating, away let us go,

Heigh-ho! come to the fair!

There'll be racing and chasing from morning till night,

And round-about's turning to left and to right,

So it's come then, maidens and men,

To the fair in the pride of the morning

A Country Market has been a fixture in the Heart of Highland for at least 130 years, going back to one built by the Hopkins family in the 1880's. In 1955 Larry Boarman recognized a special opportunity in the new store just built at Rte. 108 and Highland Road to replace the Rannie store which had burned spectacularly the year before. This store, the current **Boarman's Country Market**, is the fourth store on this site. There were certainly fiddlers playing in the orchestra Goetz Meats provided for the gala opening in May. Over the next few decades, Larry and son George put on a series of celebrations at the crossroads for the enjoyment of residents of the surrounding communities. These included rides, music, radio remote broadcasts, parades, antique car shows and games and activities for everyone. More than likely there was also a mouth wateringly delicious pig roasted as only Larry can do it.

As the nation's Bicentennial approached, the citizens of Highland gathered to plan a major event at the crossroads. Carol Glynn, a key member of the current Highland Day Steering Committee, was integrally involved in Highland Day 1976. It was a major undertaking and celebration as befitted the nation's 200th birthday.

So lock up your house, there'll be plenty of fun,

And it's heigh-ho! come to the fair!

For love-making too, if so be you've a mind,

Heigh-ho! come to the fair!

For hearts that are happy are loving and kind,

Heigh-ho! come to the fair!

After the Bicentennial, Highland Day seems to have gone dormant until sometime in the late 1990's when Postmaster Bill Daley, a man of intense energy and vision for all things Highland, breathed life back into the event. Bill has always been a catalyst for action. He brought the Heart of Highland merchants together for a day of community-focused sales, promotions and activities. As Bill looked ahead toward his retirement, he began to cast about for who might take the reins of this event. It was not a simple thing to find someone willing to take on an event of this type. In fact, it wasn't one person, but rather a group of people, the **Greater Highland Crossroads Association** which stepped up to the plate. Just formed in 2002, GHCA picked up the Highland Day gauntlet in 2005. In 2011 GHCA was joined in the production of the event by the newly-minted **Highland Business Association**. Together these two organizations now plan the annual fall festival which has been repeatedly voted one of the best events in the area by Howard County Magazine. It annually draws about 5,000 attendees who enjoy displays by local businesses, a Boarman pig roast, a Shoppe of Horrors at the **Highland Groomery**, children's games, a parade, live music and all the elements which have always been at the heart of Highland Day. It is a time for neighbors to come together, for people from beyond the community to discover all Highland has to offer and for merchants to appreciate long-time customers while welcoming new ones.

Seems like not a whole lot has changed in the way we celebrate our lives, our community, our friends and our neighbors in the past 130 years. We wouldn't have it any other way!