

Museum Around the Corner

The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

May Day Parade ©

Georgetown has always loved a parade. Anniversaries of important events, competitions between local fire companies, school celebrations, bring us together in great numbers to enjoy the festivities. One such occasion that was held every year from at least 1939 (and probably earlier) was the May Day Festival and Parade.

In an article in the Georgetown Times of May 7, 1981, Ethlyn Missroon reminisced about this annual production. "This was supposed to be a children's event, but if the truth be told, it was more of a mom and dad's parade...when these parents would fix up their small fry and some of the larger ones and listen to the oohs and ahs as the cute little dickenses and their elder siblings marched, were pushed or pulled via various conveyances, rode wheels of trios and duos and generally enjoyed a special day in May.

"Mrs. Clara Mae Wright, assisted by Mildred Higgins, always interested in drama classes and writing plays, set down some of the origin of the Georgetown May Day Parade...a festivity remembered still with affection by those who participated and by those who planned. The event was sponsored by Duncan Memorial Methodist Church, but anyone could participate and there was no entry fee.

"The May Day parade had its beginning when two young ladies of the church, Miss Gertie Davis and Miss Louise Beaty, became convinced that nothing would be so charming as a host of dolled-up children coming down Front Street under the beamings of a crowd of fond parents.

"Time passed, the parade grew, adding this and that...marching to Winyah High's band, with May Pole dances on Turner's lawn, the eventual end of every parade, and the crowning of a May Queen with an equally charming court.

"In 1942 the 14th annual May Day Celebration was staged. The affair was climaxed with the crowning of Miss Chlotilde LaBruce as Queen of the May. Hundreds of children and young people took part in the festivities. The Parade was led by the Winyah High School Band in the effective red, gold and white uniform. Following was the Winyah Victory Corps, made up of young boys. Over 25 prizes were given for costumes and decorations by Representative James B. Morrison after the parade reached Turner's Lawn. [This large expanse of green lawn was located at 417 Prince Street.]

Maid of Honor was Miss Mary Mayo and the attendants were Alease Cooper, Margery Thompson, Martha Foxworth, Rosalynn Fogel, Norma Wilson, Vivien Kelly, Joanne Munneke, Marti Black and Margaret Rose Thomas.

The pages were Yvonne and James Raftelis, with attendants Inez Lipham and Mary Walker. Donald Swett, dressed as an Air Force aviator, carried the crown. He had better luck than one

little fellow, Dannye Bragdon, another crown bearer who was hesitant to carry the crown on a special resting place-his security pillow. His mother assured him they would just remove the crown and not bother his pillow. He became completely undone when they seized and took away both the pillow and the crown.

Others taking part in the event were Roger Bragdon, Bud Campbell, Billy King, N.J. Cone, J.B. Bass and J. Standrod, all wearing soldier costumes.

The small festival eventually ceased to be but even until now [1981] if anyone mentions the Duncan Memorial Methodist Church's May Day Festival in a crowd of any size, very likely there will be several who will smile and say..."I remember that; I won the prize for..." or "I was the clown...or the queen, or the attendant...or the baby in the 'Best Decorated Carriage'."

It really says something for the spirit of a small town when one looks back and sees the busy people of the city who took time to stop and "play pretend" with the children of that era. Many teachers and women of the professions and many, many more all worked together to make a small and whimsical occasion an experience recalled by some of those youngsters, now adults with children of their own, as some of the better times of their early life in "their town."