

Old Frackville Tales

May 30, 1975 by Lorraine Stanton

The Schuylkill County Historical Pageant was held May 31, 1934 at the Schuylkill County Fair Grounds. This is the location of the Alcoa Co. of America in Cressona.

This was an inspiration that Mr. Joseph Zerbey of Pottsville had dreamed of for many years.

He realized the value of the historic lore of Schuylkill County and wanted to see it heralded in song and story, but on April 18, 1933, he passed away. His associates fulfilled his ambition and plans were continued to hold this event.

The Pageant was a beautiful reenactment of events that occurred in our county from the time of its origin.

A Trumpet fanfare heralded the presentation of Miss Schuylkill County, who gave the address of Welcome. Miss America arrived with her forty-eight states and gave the Response.

A special song, "Schuylkill County We're Coming Back To You" was written by Mr. Robert Braun, of the Braun School of Music. The Cass Boys Choir sang under the direction of Miss Mary Muldowney.

The Pageant Queens and their attendants were then escorted to the Court of Honor and the scenes from the panorama of Schuylkill County's past were reviewed before them.

All high school bands in the county were represented and 4000 school children played roles in the scenes that were re-enacted.

Among the most touching stories is the Regina Hartman Legend.

"Carried off by Indians as a child with her sister, her mother despaired of ever seeing them again. Years later, from Carlisle, the mother received a summons. A number of prisoners had been returned. Would she attempt to recognize her daughters? She needed no second invitation. Thither she went and gazed anxiously at the assembled prisoners. It seemed vain— she knew none of them; there was no answering glance of recognition in any eye. The Commander, Col. Bouquet, was

moved to help with a sudden inspiration. Perhaps some old song, did she know any? She did. A German lullaby— she had rocked her children to sleep with it many times. Yes, she would sing it. And then as the first quavering notes fell on the air there was an expectant hush— and a slim girl, swarthy faced from long exposure, but white-unmistakable white— was weeping in her arms.

A beautiful story and a happy ending. A little Indian girl much loved by Regina was later adopted by Mrs. Hartman and the reunited family lived happily together for many, many years."

This scene was played by students of the Girardville High School.

The Frackville High School was represented in the Dance of Nations. Miss Ruth Habel was the director for these dances.

The Hungarian dance was performed by Kathryn Lucas, Mary Ellen Beddow, Betty Habel, Mildred Bohard, Joan Walsh, Catherine Sedor, Pearl Richardson, Anna Rozella, Marion James, Evelyn Hoffman, Lois Hoffman and Agnes Curry.

The Irish Dance was performed by Betty Neiman, Gertrude Becker, Anna Cuttic, Vera Gambal, Marguerite Cahill, Helen Murphy, Jean Leddicot, Violet Kanavage, Mary Barry, Mary Boner, Cora Sanner and Myrtle Feinberg.

The English Drill was performed by Charlotte Caton, Elicabeth Hawranick, Betty Lamb, Jean Leiser, Eleanor Matunis, Estelle Monahan, Lois Mucklow, Rita O'Donnell, Mary Withers, Violet Blaskovitch, Bertha Wasilewski, Aldona Zelenka, and Mabel Bucklew.

They had two presentations of the pageant. The crowds had exceeded all expectations!

More than 1000 cars had to be accommodated for parking and hundreds of buses were hired to transport the school children.

It was the largest pageant ever presented in the county.

Do you remember it? I do. I was there!