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Who knew of the humble but strong beginnings of the Lanesville Heritage Weekend? According to founding and still active members today Pete and Joan Schickel, the Lanesville Heritage Weekend began with a presidential challenge and with a dream of the Lanesville Future Homemaker of America chapter to become an honor chapter by hosting a celebration.

The country was getting ready to celebrate its 200th year, the Bicentennial, and communities were encouraged to hold their own festivals to join in the celebration. With the help of a few dedicated folks, the first Lanesville Heritage Weekend was held in May of 1976.

The very first Lanesville Heritage weekend was originally known as the Lanesville Bicentennial Celebration.

Three teachers from Lanesville High School: John Richert, Linda Steder, and Bruce Green along with founding community members: Pete and Joan Schickel, Paul Schneider, Don Mathes, and Wilfred "Arky" Blank, and the Lanesville High School Future Homemaker of America (FHA) chapter committed to putting on the festival.

Knowing the amount of resources it would take, they applied for and received a \$500 federal grant in association with the encouragement from the president for community events to be held. When that didn't seem to cover things, another \$500 was applied for and also received.

Students, teachers, and community members got to work bringing to life the ideas and events to be featured at the festival.

It was decided that the festival would celebrate Lanesville's heritage as a farming community.

And to this day, do not miss the importance of the education available when you attend the festival in regard to farming and agriculture as a way of life and how important that is to each and every individual, community, and country.

The 1976 Lanesville Bicentennial Celebration's schedule of events included: a Queen Contest, Thoroughbred Chorus, Parade, Dinner, Baseball Game, Bill Monroe & The Bluegrass

Boys concert, Street Dance, Breakfast on Sunday, Speech Contest, and Talent Show (as taken from the Lanesville Heritage Weekend 25th Anniversary compilation book).

The officers of the Lanesville FHA committed to making a quilt to symbolize the Bicentennial that would be raffled at the festival. All events took place at Lanesville High school, on the grounds of Franklin Township's Athletic Club, and at Walter Q. Gresham Park. Representatives and leaders from all local churches and organizations were invited to join in the planning and development.

Teacher and then Student Council Advisor, John Richert was elected as President of the Bicentennial Committee and served as Heritage President until his death in 1990. Richert, born himself on July 4th, 1937 seemed to pour much of himself and the things he loved into the Bicentennial Celebration, later to be known as the Lanesville Heritage Weekend.

The 1976 Lanesville Bicentennial Celebration was such a success that it was hosted again the following year and still continues, now known as the Lanesville Heritage Weekend, held the second full weekend in September.

According to Joan Schickel, the festival was initially held in May both in 1976 and 1977; however it conflicted with an event that the Corydon Jaycees hosted so a decision was made to move the Lanesville event to September which perfectly tied in with the agricultural theme, holding the festival at harvest time.

Due to the success of the Heritage Weekend, land purchases were made by those who willingly pitched in to do so. An initial six acres were purchased in 1978, then an additional 9 acres, 12 acres, and finally another 9 acres spreading the festival out over a massive 36 acres 36 years after its inception.

The 1991 Heritage Weekend debuted the addition of the John R. Richert Gazebo.

Richert dreamed of a place to be used by the school for productions and ceremonies of all kinds and less than a year after his early passing, one was built in his honor and makes a perfect addition to festivities and school functions alike. In 1996, the Lanesville Heritage Committee broke ground on the Lanesville Heritage Community Center. The building housed some Heritage Weekend events as well as served the community as a rental hall when not in use for festival purposes.

The annual Heritage Weekend parade on Main Street is a huge draw, not only from the local community but from several surrounding areas. The 1976 parade consisted of 44 units to include a John Deere tractor, a threshing machine, and the Laneville High School marching band and in recent years has had as many as over 200 entries. The parade attracts thousands of viewers who line both sides of Main Street in Lanesville. And actual attendance figures are more along the lines of tens of thousands with over 50,000 given as recent crowd estimates on one tiny, little country street.

In 1998, it was estimated that about 60,000 people attended the Lanesville Heritage Weekend from 24 different states and 5 foreign countries.

The Lanesville Heritage Weekend today, as previously spreads over 36 acres of land and has grown to include such activities and attractions as: truck and tractor pulls, tractor and machinery exhibit, gas engine display, Main Street parade, an 8 mile run, 2 mile run, and 5 mile walk, midway rides, helicopter rides, a hot air balloon glow and race, sawmill demonstrations, traditional agricultural demonstrations, queen and princess contests, horse-show pitching contest, tractor games, a pedal tractor pull, amateur fiddlers' contest, plenty of food and craft booths. There is plenty offered to keep a family busy for the duration of the three day event.

So why the success? What is the secret to a one-time event becoming an overwhelming and

commanding presence in the community for 36 years strong? Just that, community.

Community is held in high esteem in Lanesville as seen in the Heritage Committee's chosen Scripture verse: "If one member suffers, all suffer together; If one member is honored, all rejoice together." 1 Corinthians 12:26

It was the school, organizations, local churches, and the community that came together in this venture.

There was ownership and hard work poured into every aspect of the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration as well as every year since. The land purchases that were made were not done so through government gifting or costly loans. Land was purchased by those who volunteered to pitch in a portion and agree to be paid back interest free over an up to ten year period of time.

'The festival has brought our community together,' said Joan, 'to respect one another and join hands with one another to build up and give back to the community.'

She added that participation and generosity from the local business communities seem to be a result of the fact that the Lanesville Heritage Weekend is a non-profit venture, only in existence for the betterment of Lanesville as a whole.

Her husband, Pete Schickel is often known for saying "It is a labor of love to work with our neighbors."

Joan said the festival's success cannot be attributed to one single person but "it is the charity, love, and respect of a group of people with different ideas coming together. What a great example of a Christian community."

This year's Heritage Weekend Festival is set to be the best yet. The Lanesville Heritage Committee meets continuously throughout the year to plan. It is a tireless effort but the result is a festival that people can enjoy, that people can count on to be fun-filled, family friendly, and packed with events and attractions.

A main set of amenities that the Heritage Weekend offers all include the word "FREE" - FREE parking, FREE admission, FREE shuttle service.

This year's second full weekend in September falls on September 14, 15, and 16.

For those who have attended for years, it's a chance to reminisce and a tradition.

For those who have never attended the Lanesville Heritage Weekend, bring your family, come and be a part of history while having tons of fun.

A survey was conducted in 1998 by information booth volunteers which found that there were attendees that year from 24 different states as well as 5 foreign countries (as taken from the Lanesville Heritage Weekend 25th Anniversary compilation book).

When it is said that the Lanesville Heritage Weekend offers something for everyone, they leave nothing out.

There is even a Sunday morning breakfast at 8:00 a.m. followed by a worship service held in the John W. Richert gazebo at 9:00 a.m.

For more information on the Lanesville Heritage Weekend and to see the schedule of events you can visit www.lanesvilleheritageweekend.org.