



Farmer Folks Take a Holiday

“SPREADING THE EAGLE” was done with verve and pardonable pride by the settlement of Faribault on July 4, 1873. Incorporated only the year before, the Rice County town must indeed have overflowed with an estimated crowd of seven to eight thousand celebrants. From the account reprinted below, it would seem that the Patrons of Husbandry, as the Grangers were officially called, comprised a large part of the audience which listened to Ignatius Donnelly extol the virtues of country, community, and common sense. Although it had been founded only six years before, the Grange was at its height during the 1870s; Donnelly spoke effectively to one of the group’s proclaimed goals: to protect farmers against fraud in general and against the machinations of monopolies and corporations in particular. The orator wrote in his diary for that day that there was a “Very attentive audience. Full of enthusiasm. It really looks as if the farmers were in earnest.” The following is an unidentified newspaper report in volume 105, pages 38 to 40, in the Donnelly Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society:

IF ANY of the men of '76 could have stepped into the streets of Faribault yesterday their hearts would have been gladdened by the

many evidences that Independence Day still retains its hold upon the affections of the people. As elsewhere, a heavy shower in the morning made early risers fearful that the observance of the day would be spoiled by rain. About seven o'clock, however, the clouds began to break up. . . . The townspeople already had begun to gather in the principal street which were enlivened by the red jackets of firemen going hither and thither on the way to their several rendezvous. The small boy population was not allowed to indulge in fire crackers, etc., but bore the deprivation with as much philosophy as the small boy might reasonably be expected to possess. Before long wagons began coming in from the surrounding country . . . until at last a steady stream of vehicles of all sorts gave the main street an exceedingly brisk appearance. The occupants of the wagons . . . sauntered up and down, dressed, of course, in their “shop clothes,” chattering and joking, and having just such a good time generally as is usually seen where the farmer folks take a holiday. About ten o'clock the Granges began to put in an appearance. . . . ten, a dozen, or twenty wagons each, from all parts of the surrounding country — men, women and children, from the infant in arms to the gray haired patriarch, some with the simple regalia of their order, others with their wagons decked with flowers and branches of trees, and all with comfortable looking baskets stowed in snug corners, and suggestive of good cheer within.

By half past eleven all had assembled. . . . and the command [was] given to march. The order of procession was as follows: Marshal Hamlin; A band of music playing patriotic airs; the Faribault fire department, a fine looking body of men, numbering 120, in very tasty uniforms, and whose general appearance did credit to themselves and to their chief engineer: then followed the line of wagons bearing the Grangers, near the head of which was a carriage in which rode Mayor Dunbam [*Buckham*], Hon. Ignatius Donnelly, the orator of the day, Col. J. C.

Morrow and Major Rice, who acted as presiding officer. . . . about a mile or so from the town, the entrance to a beautiful grove was reached. Outside this grove the Grangers halted and fastened their teams, and then poured into the picnic grounds taking along their lunch bags, boxes and baskets of every description. The number of persons present was not far, if any, from seven thousand. There were about 400 wagons . . . and, by actual count, seven hundred and odd vehicles. . . . Besides those who rode there must have been between one and two thousand persons on foot. . . . [There follows a list of Granges present.]

There were other Granges represented. . . . Almost every Grange bore a silken banner with devices in gold and colors. Most of them were inscribed with mottoes such as "No Monopoly," "A Terror to Rings," "Crush the Giant, Wrong," "Justice and Equality," "Peace only in Justice," "Live and Let Live," "Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty," "Vox Populi Vox Dei," etc.

The grove chosen for the scene of the gathering is a most lovely spot. . . . it would be hard to find a better for open air speaking. After an hour or more . . . the company gathered around the platform, about which were grouped the Grangers' banners. The exercises began by Major Rice announcing that Col. Morrow would read the Declaration of Independence, and the Colonel "socked it" to old King George just as if he (the Colonel) had no compunctions about hitting a man who was down. Following the Declaration came the address . . . in Mr. Donnelly's usual eloquent and happy vein. He apologized for speaking extemporaneously . . . and he perhaps owed them an apology on another point. . . . [It had been reported] that he was traveling about the country in a chip hat, hickory shirt, blue overalls and plantation shoes without stockings. On this occasion, in deference to the presence of the townspeople and representatives of the press, he had laid aside his farmer's attire, and had come in his best clothes. Mr. Donnelly proceeded to discuss the many

reasons why Americans should be proud of their country.

Mr. Donnelly said the principles of the Declaration of Independence were identical with those displayed in the banner inscriptions around him. These principles, he thought, must be upheld by the farming community, for he despaired of the great cities, sunk in vice and corruption.

Mr. Donnelly compared the present struggle against the tyranny of the money power with Andrew Jackson's fight against the Bank of the United States. . . . Mixed up with this fight was the contest over the protective tariff system, which, like the great bank, tended to concentrate wealth to be used for corrupt purposes, to make the poor poorer and the rich richer. This was the same battle we are fighting to-day, the battle against monopoly.

The speaker then assailed the protective tariff forcibly and . . . quoted from Jackson's message to the Senate in 1834.

In conclusion Mr. Donnelly urged his hearers to consider well these things in their homes and to act upon the result of their thoughts.





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