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Region Celebrates The Fourth Of July

Autryville Honors Its Famous Citizens

By BILL WRIGHT
Sunday Staff Writer

AUTRYVILLE—Rain kept the crowd small as Autryville staged its first July 4 observance Saturday but failed to dampen the good time and patriotic fervor of those who did show up.

The celebration seemed to take on a special meaning following an attempt earlier in the year to do away with the town as an incorporated municipality.

The observance was as much a celebration of the town's own past as it was that of the country. Calling the observance Micajah Autry Day, citizens paid tribute to that famous Autryville native who died in the battle at the Alamo, and to Capt. James L. Autry, founder of Autryville.

There was also a warm dose of old fashioned American patriotism as Mayor Donna Cashwell and other townspeople held opening ceremonies amid intermittent rain at 8:30 a.m.

Mayor Spell welcomed the group to the event, and was joined in the welcome by Tate Spell who presided at the opening ceremony.

The Rev. Roger Jackson, pastor of Pleasant Union Baptist Church, main speaker for the event, declared, "America is a great country."

"When you hear someone talking about the blue Mediterranean Sea, you tell them about the Atlantic," he said. "When you hear them talking about the Danube, you tell them about the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, and even the South River, that separates Sampson and Cumberland counties."

"I love America," he said. "I wish it could happen again today, and that bell could toll again as it did in 1776. I wish we could hear that bell ring one more time."

In her tribute to Capt. James L. Autry, Mayor Cashwell recalled that he was not only a leader in civic affairs who founded the town of Autryville and gave the town its name, but that he founded many of the churches in the area.

Dr. Mayo Bundy, guest speaker, said he had researched the Autry family for the last six years, and learned that Capt. Autry was a captain of the Home Guard in Sampson and Columbus counties, serving as head of Company C, Second Regiment of the Home Guard.

He founded the town on March 3, 1891, the date of its incorporation. He operated a store here, and had a turpentine landing on the South River. At the time of its founding the town was one mile square, Bundy said.

Bundy said Autry put up the $10,000 that was necessary to bring the railroad to the town, luring the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad to come through around 1889. It later moved to Roseboro.

"He was very excited about this town," Bundy said of Autry, who was born in 1838 and died in 1914.

Saturday afternoon at a final ceremony Dr. Bundy paid tribute to Autryville's best-known citizen out of the past, Micajah Autry.

Micajah Autry was born in 1793 and served in the military during the War of 1812, being involved the battle of Wilmington and later released in Charleston, S.C., in 1815.

He returned to Sampson County, but left the county in 1823 to go to Hayesboro, Tenn., where he practiced law. He later moved to Jackson, Tenn., in 1831, where he met and married a widow.

"He was a dreamer," Bundy said. "He became cught up in the Andrew Jackson — Davie Crockett fever. He went with a group of 17 mostly professional people with Crockett to Texas, where they made up the Davie Crockett Brigade in the battle of the Alamo.

Because of his reputation as a

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Observer-Times photo by STEVE ALDRIDGE

Patriotic citizens of all ages participate in Autryville Independence Day parade

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marksman and his prior war experience Autry was chosen by Crockett to fire at Santa Anna, the leader of the Mexican forces. He missed.

The entire brigade was killed on May 6, 1836.

A picture of Autry hangs inside the Alamo today, and his name is in fourth place on a list of names in the shrine of those who fought and died there.

In addition to the speeches the day's activites included a 10-kilometer run, motorcycle race, a parade, and operation of food and craft booths along the street.