

JONATHAN: BIRTHPLACE OF THE RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

For some, the Renaissance Festival has become an annual tradition and for others, once a decade is plenty! Whatever your preference for all that merriment, few may remember that the Renaissance Festival actually started in Jonathan. The original location for the festival was in the woods in McKnight Park just north of Jonathan Elementary School. The first Renaissance Festival was in 1971 and was modest compared to the current day event.

At its inception, the Jonathan Development Corporation helped the founders build a couple of booths and a stage to help the Festival get its start. Admission was \$1.50 and still carried a 60's vibe with lots of beads, people making candles and independent crafters. Included was Shakespearean readings and good food. More than 25,000 people visited the two weekend grand opening of the festival than named, "A Celebration of Nature, Art, and Life!"

Many of the food and craft booths were originally run by local groups or citizens. Dick Tirk, who was the President of the Jonathan Association, was approached by the Festival to run a booth. For years, the Jonathan Association, in conjunction with the Chaska Civic Theater, operated the "Dueling Buckets" booth, which is still in operation today. Dick Tirk was a faithful participant at the Renaissance Festival for approximately 15 years. His character, "Sir Rotten", was well known at the Festival with his good natured teasing of maiden and knight alike. The Renaissance Festival stayed in Jonathan only two years as it outgrew its location. It briefly moved to Chanhassen before ending up in Shakopee where it has been for many years.

The festival has grown from one stage and a clearing in the woods to over 500 entertainers with sixteen stage locations. Compared to the original handful of peddlers, there are now 275 Artisan booths with crafts from throughout the United States. Foodies alike attend to sample varieties of food fit for a king! Some popular items are the infamous turkey legs, elephant ears, Scottish eggs, or a Smoralicious! Annual attendance has climbed to 280,000 -which makes it the largest in the country.

Jonathan is proud to have had a hand in the original Festival which has developed into the success it is today. Next time you find yourself at the Renaissance Festival, look closely you might just see a Jonathan neighbor in character! HUZDAH!

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