

Labor Day unit planning parade, other events, older than holiday

By BOB PROSKE

Courier staff writer

The Labor Day Association is older than Labor Day itself.

That's what President Gary Fritz found after hours of going through newspaper microfilm.

The association, currently comprised of eight United Mine Workers and AFL-CIO locals, traditionally has been responsible for planning a Labor Day parade and other attractions in southwestern Indiana cities. This year, the events are planned in Princeton.

The first Labor Day Association parade was held in Princeton in 1886, eight years before Labor Day became a nation-
said Fritz, who works at a

van and the furthest south, Evansville.

Although immensely popular in the 1930s, '40s and '50s, the celebration went through a lull in the 1970s, Fritz said. Participation by locals and the number of spectators tapered off.

At one time, Fritz said, "we were more concerned with turning people away than getting people in."

In the early 1900s, he said it was common for families to plan train trips, from Boonville to Princeton, for example, to see the parade and other events.

Fritz said that in 1949, an estimated 75,000 attended the event in Princeton. Attendance figures between 1930 and 1949 were frequently in the range of 50,000 or 60,000.

Fritz said the festivities were so popular that in the

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