

# Broward Pioneer Days

## Annual Event Exhibits County's History And Culture



Part of the Pioneers honored at Pioneer Days 1977 (Broward County Historical Commission).

The pioneering spirit, lauded throughout the illustrious history of our country, can never be commended too strongly.

There aren't too many places today where one can sit and hear a first-hand account of what the area was like with only a handful of settlers. Yet many in Broward County can still recall what it was like when its one-million-plus population was one-tenth that number.

That's what Pioneer Days is all about. It's a celebration of those who can say "I remember when." And, someday, some of the newer residents may be able to recount, in that same spirit, "I remember Broward County's first Pioneer Days."

Shortly after the Broward County Historical Commission was formed in November 1972, Commission Member Sue Phillips suggested that the group establish an annual county-wide fair or show, honoring pioneer residents. It would permit the historical societies and other civic-oriented groups to exhibit their historical and educational materials. The desired result, of course, was to share information about the area's history and heritage with Broward's residents.

With the help of the Mental Health Association of Broward County, the First Annual Broward County Pioneer Days was held May 5-6, 1973, at the American Heritage School in Wilton Manors. Featuring the Seminole Indians, 3,000 people turned out for the premier Pioneer Days.

The War Memorial Auditorium in Fort Lauderdale was the scene of the second Pioneer Days. Again, the Mental Health Association co-sponsored the event with the Historical Commission and, this year, the City of Fort Lauderdale joined forces. The activities, exhibits, and programs were expanded. A turn-of-the-century "Picnic in the Park" was the theme, but the "picnic" was a wet one. That weekend, October 5-6, 1974, was one of the stormiest of the year; yet 17,000 people came to War Memorial and Holiday Park to take part in the events.

The year 1975 signaled the 50th Anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Hollywood; thus, Hollywood co-sponsored Pioneer Days that year at Hollywood Hills High School on October 18-19. The Roaring '20s decade dictated the 1975 Pioneer Days' theme because that was the period when Hollywood became a bona fide city. Some 7,000 people attended the affair.

Long before the efforts for the 1975 Pioneer Days Exposition culminated, a committee had initiated work on the 1976 event. Since the United States' Bicentennial also marked the 50th Anniversary of the beginning of Port Everglades, plans were made to hold the Bicentennial Pioneer Days at the Port. With the cooperation of the Port Everglades Commission, administration, and personnel the "best ever" Pioneer Days to date exceeded all hopes and dreams. Some 70,000 people trooped

through the exhibits at the Port's new terminal building on October 9-10. In keeping with the two great events commemorated, the 1976 theme was nautical and patriotic.

As good as the '76 Pioneer Days fete was, the 1977 attendance records topped it. Pompano Beach was the co-sponsor and the city featured agriculture as its theme. On the weekend of October 1-2, an estimated 85,000 people attended the Pioneer Days festivities which were held for the second straight year at Port Everglades.

The sixth annual Pioneer Days again was set at Port Everglades. The city of Oakland Park co-sponsored the event, bringing in a crowd estimated at more than 80,000. Pioneer Days had become, it was obvious, a tradition to Broward Countians.

Pioneer Days also has become a year-round project. Co-sponsored cities worked diligently to plan and coordinate every detail, down to the punch and cookies for those pioneers who came together to remind everyone what Broward County is all about.

This year Dania plays host to Pioneer Days. Festivities are set for September 29-30. Exhibits this year focus on the theme of Broward County's Educational Heritage. Once again, the popular Port Everglades is the scene in which the story of Broward County unfolds, inviting all people to catch glimpses of what life was like 'way back when.



Square dancing was and is a favorite form of recreation. Scene at Pioneer Days 1976. (Broward County Historical Commission).