

**McLean County Museum of History**

**Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival Collection**

Processed by  
JoAnna Mink  
Summer 2018

**Collection Information**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1970-2017
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	Past Perfect #2021.0002

## Brief History

On Memorial Day weekend in 1970 an estimated 60,000 people, mostly hippies and college-age students, descended on the village of Heyworth, south of Bloomington, Illinois, to attend the Kickapoo Creek Outdoor Rock Festival. The festival was the brainchild of Bloomington's L. David Lewis, whose family owned a farm outside of Heyworth. Lewis wanted to recreate in McLean County the Woodstock concert, which had occurred four months earlier in White Lake, New York, and attracted more than 400,000 people.

The festival took place on Memorial Day weekend, May 30-31, 1970, and featured music, nudity, the open sale of drugs, and rainstorms that turned the farm into a muddy mess. Some authorities estimated attendance at nearly 60,000. The bands who played included BB King, Canned Heat, Country Joe and the Fish, Delaney and Bonnie, Butterfield Blues Band, Rick Nielsen and Fuse, New Colony 6, Dan Fogelberg, REO Speedwagon, and the Amboy Dukes.

Views of the event vary hugely. It was a mess, an absolute mess, said state's attorney Welch. They were a good bunch of kids, claimed Merle Shannon, then a Heyworth police officer and later mayor of the town.

McLean County State's Attorney Paul Welch filed an injunction against Lewis the day before the festival. However, Lewis moved forward with the festival that included a motorcycle gang as security. Legal proceedings against Lewis were filed on June 4, beginning several weeks of court hearings, including contempt charges against Lewis and Kickapoo Creek Inc.

The Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival took place within the context of local activism. ISU and IWU students marched through Bloomington/Normal on May 5, 1970, an event triggered by the shooting on May 4 of Kent State University students by the Ohio National Guard during a mass protest to the May 2 invasion of U.S. troops into Cambodia. On May 6, ISU President Samuel Braden agreed to lower the U.S. flag for six days to commemorate Kent State and Black Panther victims and on May 19 for Malcolm X's birthday.

## Scope

The collection includes summaries by Robert Bradley, PhD, of legal proceedings before and after the concert. Two sets of newspaper clippings describe the concert itself (Folder 3) and the local social context (Folder 5).

## Folder Inventory

### **Folder 1: Kickapoo Creek Inc, Legal Proceedings**

- 1.1 "Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival Cases," summary of legal proceeding, by Dr. Robert Bradley, June 2017, 2 pp.
- 1.2 "Kickapoo Rock Concert Events," compiled by Bob Bradley, primarily from *Pantagraph*, 2015, 9 pp.
- 1.3 "What a Time in the Heartland: The Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival," handout for Bloomington Public Library program, May 7, 2017, compiled by Bob Bradley, 2 pp.

- 1.4 McLean County Circuit Court docket book for Case No. 70CH97, listing actions from April 29, 1970 to April 18, 1983, when case was concluded.

**Folder 2: Festival – May 30-31, 1970**

- 2.1 “Major Musical Groups at 1970 Kickapoo Rock Festival,” 2 pp. compiled by Dr. Robert Bradley, 2015.
- 2.2 “Woodstock in the Heartland: The Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival” by Dr. Robert Bradley, printout of PowerPoint presentation May 18, 2018, 7pp.
- 2.3 “Sex, Drugs, and Rock & Roll” The Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival in Court,” Lunch & Learn Series handouts, by Dr. Robert C. Bradley, April 14, 2016, 2 sheets.
- 2.4 “What a Time in the Heartland: The Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival,” Bloomington Public Library Program, by Dr. Robert C. Bradley, May 7, 2017, 2pp.
- 2.5 “Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival,” compiled by Chris Young, May 2020, 5pp.
- 2.6 “Forgotten Hits – “The Incident at Kickapoo Creek,” by Robert Campbell, May 30, 2020, 18pp.
- 2.7 “Downstate Sounds” post by Chris Young, September 26, 2020, 3pp.

**Folder 3: Newspaper Clippings** (from *The Pantagraph*, unless noted)

- 3.1 “Rock Concert Opponents Find Governor Sympathetic,” April 30, 1970
- 3.2 “Kickapoo Hearing Reset For May 22,” May 7, 1970, p. A-7.
- 3.3 “Simon Will Respond” (Letter to Editor), May 10, 1970
- 3.4 “Opponents of Rock Festival Outline Event’s Consequences,” May 12, 1970
- 3.5 “Concert Group Points to Delay by County,” May 13, 1970
- 3.6 “Unconstitutional To Bar Rock Festival—Defense”, May 22, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.7 “Traffic, Crowds Topics At Kickapoo Hearing”, May 23, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.8 “Rock Festival Image Marred”, May 24, 1970.
- 3.9 “Decision Due Wednesday”, May 24, 1970.
- 3.10 “Festival Detour Mapped”, May 24, 1970.
- 3.11 “Work on Ground Progresses As Rockfest Hearings Ends”, May 24, 1970.
- 3.12 “Where Kickapoo Rock Festival ‘Will Happen’”, May 26, 1970, p. A-3.
- 3.13 “5 Bands Added for Concert; 60 Workers Preparing Site”, May 27, 1970.
- 3.14 “Law, Health Officials Plan for Rock Festival”, May 27, 1970.
- 3.15 “Keep Streets Clear, Chief Asks Citizens”, May 27, 1970.
- 3.16 “Court Issues Injunction Against Rock Festival”, May 27, 1970.
- 3.17 “Musical Farm Sale Planned”, May 27, 1970.
- 3.18 “Incident at Kickapoo Creek”, May 28, 1970, p. A-1.
- 3.19 “Festival Site Work Goes On”, May 28, 1970.
- 3.20 “Accidents Mar Festival,” May 29, 1970
- 3.21 “Health Inspection Barred”, May 29, 1970.
- 3.22 “Rainy Weekend Likely”, May 29, 1970, p. A-1.
- 3.23 “Court Firm-Rock Solid”, May 29, 1970.
- 3.24 “Accidents Mar Festival”, May 29, 1970, p. A-1.
- 3.25 “Rock Traffic Heavy,” May 29, 1970
- 3.26 “In Corn Land—a Soul Picnic”, May 30, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.27 “Hippie Tide Hits Heyworth”, May 30, 1970.

- 3.28 "Petty Effort To Block Festival". Letters to the Editor, May 30, 1970.
- 3.29 "Pontiac Man Dies in Crash On Way Home From Festival", May 30, 1970.
- 3.30 "30,000 Jam Rock Festival; Traffic Continues Heavy", May 31, 1970.
- 3.31 "Lewis Arrested Entering Bank", May 31, 1970.
- 3.32 "Boy Hurt Going To Festival", May 31, 1970.
- 3.33 "Best Yet To Come", May 31, 1970.
- 3.34 2 photos, May 31, 1970.
- 3.35 2 photos, May 31, 1970.
- 3.36 "And Now, the Big Cleanup", June 1, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.37 "Rock Festival Toll: One Dead, 1,500 Injured, Dozen Arrested", June 1, 1970.
- 3.38 "Festival Grinds to Halt", June 1, 1970, p. A-3.
- 3.39 "Festival Grinds to Halt", 3 photos, June 1, 1970, p. A-3.
- 3.40 "3 Hump Back Breaker", photo, June 1, 1970, p. A-3.
- 3.41 "Parking Banned?", photo, June 1, 1970, p. A-3.
- 3.42 "\$25,000 Rock Theft?", June 1, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.43 "Contempt Charges Filed In Kickapoo Creek Case, June 4, 1970
- 3.44 "Two More Named In Contempt Case", June 5, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.45 "Lewis Group Asks Trials", June 5, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.46 "Cleanup Under Way at Creek", photo, June 5, 1970.
- 3.47 "Rock Defendant List Grows", June 6, 1970, p. A-3.
- 3.48 "Rock Festival: The Mass Drug Culture Arrives," *Chicago Tribune*, June 7, 1970, Entertainment, sec. 5, p. 1.
- 3.49 "Board To Confer With Governor," June 8, 1970
- 3.50 "Hearing Dates Set In Contempt Cases, June 9, 1970
- 3.51 "Lewis, Mother Sued by Davis," June 9, 1970
- 3.52 "Rock Festival Set at Dixon", June 10, 1970, p. D-1.
- 3.53 "Solon To Sue Rockfest On Behalf of Taxpayers," June 25, 1970
- 3.54 "Welch To Question 4," June 25, 1970
- 3.55 "Kickapoo Creek Case Enters Contempt Phase," June 27, 1970
- 3.56 "Witness Places Lewis at Festival," June 29, 1970
- 3.57 "'Chicago 7' Decision Studied in Lewis Case," July 3, 1970
- 3.58 "Lewis, Festival Firm Held Guilty of Contempt," July 7, 1970
- 3.59 "Court Freezes Festival Cash," July 7, 1970
- 3.60 "Bought LSD, Marijuana At Festival—Policemen", June 30, 1970, p. A-5.
- 3.61 "Rockfest Hearings Set", August 1, 1970, p. A-3.
- 3.62 "Lid on Rockfest Report", August 5, 1970, p. A-5.
- 3.63 "Efforts To Halt Rockfest Told by Mrs. Lewis," August 18, 1970
- 3.64 "U.S. Claim \$142,000 From Kickapoo Event", August 29, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.65 "New Kickapoo Trial Denied", October 27, 1970, p. A-2.
- 3.66 "1970 festival charges dropped," February 2, 1980
- 3.67 "Promoter has new life, old worries," February 5, 1980
- 3.68 "Remembering Incident at Kickapoo Creek," *Pantagraph Plus*, June 5, 2024.
- 3.69 "A time it was ... 55 Years Ago: The Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival," *Heyworth Buzz*, June 5, 2025 (full-page spread featuring photographs by the late Bill Owens, donated to the Museum in the spring of 2025 by his daughter Kelly Roberts).

**Folder 4: Festival Forms and Poster**

- 3.1 Flier and Ticket order form for Festival.
- 3.2 Flier and Ticket order form for Festival, another version.
- 3.3 Original flier and ticket order form with note explaining donated by Catherine Helton
- 3.4 Letterhead and envelope for Kickapoo Creek Inc.

**Folder 5: Local Social Context** (Newspaper clippings, *Pantagraph* unless noted)

- 5.1 "Campuses In Reaction," May 5, 1970
- 5.2 "Statements By Braden," May 6, 1970
- 5.3 "Recruiters Ordered From Union," May 6, 1970
- 5.4 "Over 650 in ISU March," May 6, 1970
- 5.5 "Not Violence, But Thought," May 6, 1970
- 5.6 "Guard Mobilization Includes 850 Here," May 7, 1970
- 5.7 "Flag Lowering Draws Protest," May 7, 1970
- 5.8 "451 in New March at ISU: Protest Rallies on Campus," May 7, 1970
- 5.9 "How Old Is Old Glory? No Matter If It Waves," May 8, 1970
- 5.10 "IWU-ISU Students March Downtown Without Incident," May 9, 1970
- 5.11 "ISU's Braden Praises Student Body Conduct," May 9, 1970
- 5.12 "Student Group Denied Vote on Normal Council," May 10, 1970
- 5.13 "Wet and Quiet On ISU Campus," May 11, 1970
- 5.14 "2 Held in Arson Try," May 12, 1970
- 5.15 "IWU Hall Hit by Fires," May 12, 1970
- 5.16 "GOP Senators Quiz Braden on Flag," May 12, 1970
- 5.17 "Divergent Groups Push Ideas About Flag, Direction at ISU," May 13, 1970
- 5.18 "Riot Police Keep Peace at Bloomington High School," May 15, 1970
- 5.19 "Board Rejects School Closing," May 15, 1970
- 5.20 "9 Small Fires at ISU," May 15, 1970
- 5.21 "Students Battle Police ...," May 16, 1970
- 5.22 "Campus Calm Today," May 1?, 1970
- 5.23 "How Violence Came to Kent State," May 1?, 1970
- 5.24 "'Hard Hats' Hit Campus; Guard Standby Asked," May 19, 1970
- 5.25 "Flag Hoisters Defy Police," May 19, 1970
- 5.26 "Town Police Withheld," May 19, 1970
- 5.27 "Days of May: Inside the infamous flagpole standoff that put ISU on the brink," *Illinois State* 17:4 (May 2017): 12-22

**Folder 6: Miscellaneous**

- 6.1 Email exchange, Dr. Christian Elcock, France, and Museum volunteer Bob Bradley, regarding the LSD Rescue Service, January 1 and 7, 2026, 2 pp.

**Folder 7: Kinser Slides**

- 7.1 Twelve Ektachrome color slides showing Kickapoo Creek bathers and motorcyclists.

**Loose item**

Laminated front page of *Pantagraph* article, "Remembering Incident at Kickapoo Creek," May 26, 2024 (front page only).

**See also**

Book, *Incident at Kickapoo Creek*, 40th anniversary (Raycraft Productions International, 2010) by RC Raycraft, 132 pp. Call #IL (McLean) Ray Inc (book held in the Archives, in book area).

Book, *When Woodstock Came to Town* (Busterboy Press, 2016) by Ken Argenta, 228 pp. In Library Stacks.

Bill Owens Photographs, in Subject Photo Collection: Kickapoo Creek Rock Festival 1970, Bill Owens Photographs, includes 43 color and black-and-white prints. Bill Owens worked for the Bloomington *Pantagraph* newspaper, as well as the festival promoters.