



GAMTRA JULY 2004

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Cotton Ginning Days

ATTENTION GAMTRA MEMBERS

There will be **NO GAMTRA JULY MONTHLY MEETING** due to the Southeastern Old Threshers' Reunion in Denton, NC. We look forward to seeing all of you back in August.

ANNUAL SOUTHEASTERN OLD THRESHERS' REUNION
DENTON FARM PARK
1366 JIM ELLIOT ROAD
DENTON, NORTH CAROLINA
JUNE 30 – JULY 4, 2004

"The Greatest steam, gas, and antique farm equipment show in the Southeastern U. S."

History

"It all started with two guys and their flying machine! The story of Denton Farm Park and the Southeast Old Threshers' Reunion must begin with the introduction of Brown Loflin and Howard Latham.

Loflin is a lifelong resident of Davidson County's Handy community, the home of this museum park. Farmer, entrepreneur and con-summate hobbyist, he has done everything from driving race cars, flying and restoring old machinery to building the park. He is the organizer and director of the Threshers' Reunion.

Latham, a field engineer for Georgia-Pacific, lives a few miles east in Randolph County. One of their early associations was as co-owners of an airplane based at Loflin's Denton Airport, a grassed runway with an open-sided shelter as a hangar. Both piloted the airplane, and the airport was a frequent gathering place for other aviation hobbyists and their flying machines.

Latham may have been harboring a desire to be a railroad engineer. Taking vacation during the Reunion, with traditional striped cap and red bandana, he drives the steam locomotive on the park's standard gauge Handy Dandy Railroad. "It's hard work and hot," he said, "but it's also fun when I see how much it's enjoyed by kids from 2 to 92."

The park's egg was laid in 1970 when flying buddies joined them in a July 4 "Fly-In," selling airplane rides and donating the money to the establishment of a volunteer rescue squad for the area. The project was so successful that long waiting lines resulted in lost revenue. The next year, local collectors demonstrated antique farm machines to ease the impatience, and the name was changed to "Fly-In and Threshers' Reunion."

"We didn't know what we were getting into," Loflin recalled. "We found out there were a lot of antique machinery collectors looking for a place to gather, and

a lot of people who were interested in looking at it, and we sure did get caught up in it."

They traveled to various parts of the nation, visiting other antique farm machinery shows and gathering ideas for what was to become Denton's biggest happening. The event expanded over the years to two days, then three, and four, and now five. Construction has turned what once was Denton Airport into virtually a small town with a 15,000-square-foot exhibit building; a covered pavilion Music hall; a restoration shop with equipment for reviving antique machines of all sizes; a second exhibit building called Display Hall; a variety of restored old buildings; bath and restroom facilities; and structures for dispensing food and refreshment.

In the 1980s, Loflin and Latham parked their planes (the tires had been flat for years they sold it in 1987) and concentrated on their new enthusiasm. Attendance swelled until the "Fly-In" became unsafe. Airplanes were banned and the event became the "Southeast Old Threshers' Reunion".

Loflin and Latham are partners in the train and some of the restored old tractors and other machinery. .

In 1979, they recovered the locomotive from dereliction near Burnsville in the mountains of western North Carolina. Restoration of the engine, passenger cars and caboose, and building of the track, was a three-year project before the railroad's operation began in 1982.

The steam shovel was acquired in 1976 from a stone quarry near Harrisonburg, VA, where it had become a signboard.

In 1989, Loflin could resist no longer his ambition to rescue the deteriorating buildings of a plantation which pioneer Richmond Reid built in the 1940s on land along the banks of the Yadkin River, a few miles from the park in southern Davidson County. He obtained the buildings from Reid's descendants, who welcomed preservation, and he and park employees worked months on preparation and moving.

Recent land acquisition has expanded the park past 100 acres, providing space for additional parking and camping areas and a second entrance which has improved traffic flow. The future: "Bigger and better" Come and join the fun!"

You can access additional information at the following link:

<http://www.threshers.com/farmpark/seotrschedule.html>
or by telephone: (336) 859-2755 or (336) 859-3663.