



Brighton's 117th Betsey Ann Picnic to Honor Town History

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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BRIGHTON - Brighton will celebrate its history with the 117th annual Betsey Ann Picnic on Friday, June 16, and Saturday, June 17. The Picnic will include carnival rides and games, food and craft vendors, and Brighton's famous Burgoo soup.

The Picnic is sponsored by the Betsey Ann Association, which maintains Betsey Ann Park and its historical sites.

"We use our funds to help improve and support the park, and also to help some of the other organizations around town," Reggie Conlee, the president of the Betsey Ann Association, said. "This park has got a lot of history for the city of Brighton...I like to see the tradition continue."

So, what to expect for this year's event?

Little Egypt Shows & Carnival will run rides and games from 5–11 p.m. on both nights. An armband costs \$20 and provides access to all the rides. Individual tickets will also be sold at a lower price.

Bingo will run throughout the evening. Players can compete for the chance to win attendant prizes.

Several local vendors are slated to exhibit their products, including potted plants, woodworking projects, steel crafts, embroidered hats, and more. Tabi Mitchell, the Association member who oversees the vendors, expects around 30 booths. She encourages people to support these local businesses.

“I’m huge on shopping local and keeping everything in our community,” Mitchell said. “That’s the whole point of all of this, giving back to our town and those small families that really rely on this stuff and this kind of business.”

The Association hopes people will come hungry, with several food options available on both nights.

The Burgoo soup team will cook 650–700 gallons of soup, which almost always sells out. Plenty of desserts and “tasty taters” are on the menu, as well as chicken and pork steak dinners. And don’t forget to check out the fried food; while it’s known as the Fish Stand, this popular booth sells hamburgers and hotdogs in addition to white fish, river fish and catfish.

For adults 21 and older, the Beer Garden will be serving up drinks and music from local bands. Outlaw Opry will play from 7–11 p.m. on Friday, and Agent 99 will take the stage on Saturday night.

The Picnic has grown throughout the years, but it had a modest start in 1905 as a fundraiser for the Brighton Fire Department. The original fire bell is still standing at Betsey Ann Park, along with a caboose that used to run through the town. During the Picnic, the caboose is unlocked so people can walk through and see the equipment and items inside of it.

Conlee enjoys this nod to history and hopes it will continue to be an important part of the event.

“The kids just love the caboose, just crawling around on some big piece of equipment,” he said. “I like utilizing the history, some of the articles from over the years and pictures and stuff, and having some of the history preserved.”

While the purpose of the Picnic has changed and the attractions have expanded Conlee and Mitchell agree that the sentiment is the same.

“This is our 117th year of doing the Picnic. It seems like every single year, it’s growing and growing and growing,” Mitchell said. “Getting people to continue to come back to it every year is huge in order to just keep our park alive and keep everything going in our community.”

Visit the [Betsey Ann Association](#) Facebook page to learn more about the upcoming Betsey Ann Picnic.