

'Uncle Charlie' Lowe Now 89, Got His First Union Card in 1872

Meet "Uncle Charlie" Lowe, if you haven't already met him. And the chances are you have because he's been a familiar figure around these parts for years and years.

Mr. Lowe, who will be 90 years of age on Nov. 12, doesn't look it. He's still active enough to come up town just about any time he chooses, and he's apt to be seen in a lively discussion anywhere around the square.

Uncle Charlie has had a vital interest in labor all his life and he's been a regular attendant at the Labor Day celebrations held at the Saline county fairgrounds sponsored by the Saline County Trades and Labor assembly. For 24 years he served as a policeman on the grounds.

This year they honored him.

The adjoining picture was snapped by a Daily Register staff photographer at the fairgrounds Labor Day just after Mr. Lowe had been awarded a gold medal for being the oldest union man on the grounds. The medal was donated by Skaggs pharmacy.

FIRST UNION CARD IN 1872

Mr. Lowe's first union card came in 1872, when he joined the Knights of Labor at Grayson, in Carter county, Kentucky. On March 6, 1890, he related, he joined the United Mine Workers of America at Kilgore, a mining camp in Kentucky. In 1932 he transferred to the Progressive Mine Workers of America while living here in Harrisburg.

The retired coal miner stated that he always has been interested in unionism and has helped to establish various union groups.

Mr. Lowe started working in the coal mines of Kentucky as a youth when the very top pay was \$1.32 a day. But, he said, he had worked for as little as 25 cents for 10 hours work at trapping doors. This job, he explained, consisted of opening and closing doors for the mules to go in and out. During most of his mining activity, however, he chiefly worked as a machine man and loader.

MOVED HERE IN 1908

He moved to Harrisburg from Ohio in 1908 and has lived here since. His first work in this area was at the old O'Gara No. 2 mine, which was situated near where the Sahara machine shops now are located. The mine closed a few months later, he related, and he went to O'Gara No. 9, south of Harrisburg, where he worked for four or five years. Then he went to Saline No. 3 west of Harrisburg and was employed there for many years.

Mr. Lowe told of how much better are working conditions and pay for the coal miners now than they were during his early days as a miner.

"I fought to help increase these wages," he declared.

