



Al O'Leary is shaded as he plays the accordion.



ROCHESTER Dancing Draw

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY LAURENCE E. KEEFE

The brogue drifted thickly over the fairgrounds as the Irish of two countries settled in for a full day of jigs and reels from the Old Country.

Occasion for the merrymaking was a Feis (pronounced 'fesh' with that fine disregard for the rules of English pronunciation characteristic of Gaelic transliteration). According to Seamus (pronounced 'sha-mus:' it's the same thing again) McGinnity, Rochester chairman of the hosting Feis committee, a Feis is an ancient Irish custom going back to the days of St. Patrick.

In the intervening centuries, the nature of the Feis has changed more than a little from the original seven days of feasting and singing and dancing and poetry reciting by sages and scholars and troubadors and kings and maidens and just plain folks. Now it's more of a formal dance contest for judging skill in the traditional folk dances.

More than 500 contestants and their families showed up at the Monroe County fairgrounds for the July 14 event.



All the dancing, above, is performed on wooden platforms. At right, Marty O'Keefe, Tim and Sean Flanagan rest between dances in their colorful costumes, while Dominick Penrose, far right, wears an even more Irish costume.

