



HISTORY OF FARMINGTON FAIR

THE FIRST 150 YEARS

1840 - 1990

*Compiled by Mildred Luce Ross
and Donald Fletcher*

10

MILDRED LUCE ROSS

October 3, 1910 - August 24, 1990



Mildred became involved with the Franklin County Agricultural Society Fair as a young teenager who showed her Jersey heifers in the annual 4-H shows during the 3 day program. She assisted her father and uncle, C.E. & A.J. Luce in showing their Jerseys and registered sheep. She had several championship animals which she also showed at the Springfield Exposition, taking many awards.

In the 1930's she began working in the Secretary's Office at the Fair under the leadership of Frank E. Knowlton. Mildred did the entry books, kept records of the prize winners in the many different classes and typed the records for the news media people. During Fair week, she spent much of her time in the "little" cattle office registering the entries of cattle and sheep. She also entered the Town Teams (oxen and steers) and the Draft Horse teams. Over the years she got to know most of the exhibitors by name as well as knowing what animals were judged on different days, making it necessary to be in the "little office" a great deal of the time.

For 43 years Mildred worked in the Secretary's Office under Frank Knowlton, Donald Fletcher and the present Secretary Neal Yeaton. She helped locate lost children, took telephone messages for the concessionaires, handed out paychecks to the exhibitors. In her years in the office there were changes in the telephone systems, enlargement of the office space, new public address system hook-ups and finally the use of two-way radio communication for members of the staff on the grounds. Mildred enjoyed her job and looked forward each year to seeing old friends and making new ones.

*Compiled by Mildred Luce Ross to 1987
and Donald Fletcher 1987-1990*

A short history of the Franklin County Agricultural Society, with the grounds here in Farmington.

These notes are taken from the Franklin Register
Farmington Chronical
Franklin Journal and
the F.C.A.S. Sec. Books

Items often written by:

G. Milton Hatch	Mickey Maguire
Luves Chapman	Helen Caldwell Cushman
Robert White Jr.	Marman Ness
Barbara Yeaton	Emma Mahoney

At the outset of the original discussions which resulted in the birth of Farmington Fair, surely no one could have realized that they were laying the groundwork for what would become a tradition and an integral part of life in Franklin County for generations to come. The Fair, which was then only an idea, would become part of the economic and social structure of the town of Farmington. Undoubtedly, their intent was to plan a pleasant diversion to be enjoyed between the end of the hot arduous summer and the onset of the long bone-chilling Maine winter. One must suspect that most of them looked forward to an opportunity to celebrate the harvest and publicly display the crops and the livestock to which they dedicated their labors. As the years have passed, the fruits of the 1840 discussions have flowered many times, and Farmington Fair has become a showcase for not only the agriculturists but also for artists, craftsmen, entertainers, entrepreneurs, and not a few con men. To those of us who live in Franklin County, it is not a fair, but The Fair. It is a place to go to see people you never see any other time; it is an opportunity to observe at closer range magnificent animals; it is a time to appreciate the countless hours required to create something beautiful from yarn, thread, oil paint and the like. It is Hell-Drivers and harness racing, beano and belly dancers, cotton candy and carousels. When September rolls around, it's not just Fall, it's Fair Time.

On May 26, 1840 a group of area citizens met to discuss having a fair that would include Farmington and other surrounding area communities. Aware that rules and regulations were a necessity, they drafted a set of by-laws. The Maine State Legislature quickly accepted those by-laws and subsequently granted a charter to the Franklin County Agricultural Society.

The first official meeting of the Agricultural Society was held on June 20, 1840. According to the Franklin Register, the by-laws consisted of 16 articles, outlining the duties of each officer and a list of 88 charter members. Among those most influential in this new undertaking were John Titcomb, Ladoc Davis, and Oliver Currier to name a few. The Society received hearty support from the townspeople, farmers and citizens throughout Franklin County who were interested in agriculture. The idea of a fair stimulated peoples' competitive spirit for growing and exhibiting their very best crops and stock for inspection by their neighbors and counterparts.

The first officers elected to head the fledgling Agricultural Society were:

Elnathan Pope, President
Elisha Keyes, Vice President
Isaac Taylor, Recording Secretary
Nathan Cutler, Corresponding Secretary
Joseph Titcomb, Treasurer

Also elected at that time were trustees and special committees intended to make the first Franklin County Fair a success.

The first cattle show and fair was held under the sponsorship of the new Society on October 9 and 10, 1840 at the Center Village in Farmington. Many local farmers as well as several from neighboring communities participated to make it a success. One of the highlights of the fair was a speech given by Dr. James Bates of Norridgewock.

The following year, 1841, the fair was held on Tuesday and Wednesday, October 19 and 20. Additional stipulations were added in regard to crops and livestock being shown. Exhibitors of crops were required to submit a statement detailing the kind of soil the crops were grown in, the fertilizer used, as well as the general growing conditions. In this same vein, exhibitors were required to submit statements regarding age, breed, and manner of raising (as to feed and fattening) of all livestock. All statements were subject to proof and approval by the judges before a premium would be awarded and paid. Apparently the livestock displayed during this second year of the fair was considered a real asset to the region. The judges overwhelmed declared that they had great difficulty in selecting winners since the overall quality of the livestock was superior to anything they had previously judged.

At some point prior to the 1841 fair, the gentlemen decided that the ladies should be included. As a result, the ladies helped beautify the grounds and exhibited their tastes and skills in the Court House. Records indicate that the displays of womanly industry were very impressive and that Franklin County was very proud of the gallant efforts of its ladies. Great care was taken by those in charge of the ladies' exhibits to assure that none of the articles on display were soiled or damaged and that all articles were returned to their rightful owners with out hurt or damage.

Some of the premiums paid in 1841 were:

Stock cows	\$2.00
Pair of beef oxen	\$3.50
Steers	\$3.00
Pigs	\$2.00
Horses	\$4.00
Rugs	\$.50
Gloves	\$1.00

Other smaller articles paid 25 and 50 cents.

The next years went along much the same; the fair was still held in October, and each year several new items were added to those already being exhibited — apples, cheese, wool, and even bees completed with their hives!! The last afternoon of the fair traditionally featured a dynamic speaker of occasionally music and poetry to round out the program for the audience's enjoyment.

In 1845 Nathan Goodridge was President and Ebenezer Childs was Secretary of the Society. Among the changes that took place about that time were the inclusion of an entry for the plowing of 1/8 acre of land with either oxen or horses and the requirement that a town team be made up of 10 pairs of oxen or steers. Very often a town team was owned by one man.

It was also announced that the Committee members would start their examinations of the exhibits, but, at the sound of a bell, all business would be suspended. The Committee and any others who choose to join them would form a procession and march together from the Town House (probably where the Court house is today) to the Stoddard House where a dinner would be furnished by Mr. Stoddard in his best style. Tickets for this dinner could be obtained at a reasonable price. Following the dinner, there would be a test of strength of the oxen.



Looking From the Grandstand 1939.



Harness Racing since the 1860's.

Moving into the 1850's, the fair was held as usual in October of each year. In 1852 Phillips started their own fair, but Farmington continued with their regular schedule. The October weather was rather inclement, forcing cancellation of some outdoor events. Inside the Court House, however, the ladies wares were much admired in spite of the weather. The last day featured a good program with organ solos, poems and speakers.

News accounts mention a fair being held in Farmington Falls in 1854. The Agricultural Society fair was held in Farmington with good exhibits, fine weather and large crowds.

In 1857 the streets of Farmington were full. The exhibits were lower in quantity but higher in quality than in some previous years. Still held in mid-October, there were large displays of vegetables as well as numerous attractive exhibits provided by the ladies. There were increasingly more horses and colts which led fair officials to give serious consideration to adding another day especially for them. Hamblen & Morton of Farmington provided a fine exhibition of plowing equipment. Exercises were held at the Methodist Church featuring Gentlemen now prominent in the Society were S.S. Chandler, C.K. Adams, N. Goodridge, and C.K. French. The town of Strong was getting into the act and held their two-day fair just prior to Farmington's.

1858 was a year of enormous change for the Society as the fair was moved to the grounds of the so-called Norton Flat, a mile from the center of town. The Norton Flat property was 20 acres of land, rent free, owned by George W. and Samuel R. Norton. Society officials obtained a lease from the Norton's with a stipulation that the Society would build a structure 40 x 60 feet, two stories high and fence the entire area. The flat seemed to be a place for permanent grounds and suitable for the objectives contemplated by the Society. Commodious buildings had been erected for receiving articles of manufacture and assorted produce of the field and garden. Pens and stalls had been built and graded for the horses and cattle. The ladies' exhibits, however, remained at the Court House.

1858 marked the first 3-day fair, October 6, 7, & 8. Wednesday was reserved for the examination of stock, swine and poultry, with oxen and horse pulling and boys' foot races in the afternoon. On Thursday the exhibition hall opened at nine o'clock. Horses and oxen plowing matches were featured as well as the horse examination. Later in the day additional footraces were held, as was the racing of horses by members of the Society. At 11:00 AM on Friday, the audience in attendance. Ladies' equestrian exercises featured seven ladies taking part in the competition. Trotting matches were also becoming popular; one miles races consisting of three heats closed out the Friday activities.

For the first time in fair history, the Trustees had voted that no person should attend the shows and the fair unless they had a ticket or certificate of membership. It was voted to assess each member one dollar.

1859 was a poor year for Farmington Fair; the weather was terrible. Gale force winds and driving rain caused a postponement of several days. The farm displays were of good quality in spite of an early frost which damaged many crops. The fair grounds had been fenced and another building had been erected at a cost of \$700. (\$150 paid in cash with a 6% loan on the balance). Records indicate that the Society was most unhappy with the workmanship of the new fence and refused to pay for it until such time as it was rebuilt according to the original specifications. A lawsuit was filed demanding payment. The whole issue soon became academic as the original fence fell down and had to be rebuilt from the ground up.

In the early 1860's the Society was rather hard hit due

to severe weather problems as well as the onset of the Civil War. Nonetheless, they persevered. The fruit crops continued to be exceptionally good while the displays of farm goods and equipment were smaller than usual. With men away fighting the War or working for the War efforts here at home, fair attendance was down drastically. The Society voted to sell Life Membership to anyone paying a fee of \$10. Wilton's citizens began to take an active part in the fair activities, bringing exhibits which were often superior to those of the Farmington patrons. Premiums remained about the same and horse racing became a full-fledged feature of the fair with purses of \$20 and \$30.

In 1963 the Society shingled the buildings on the show grounds.

1865 marked the beginning of the 3-day fair. The Society had preserved through some lean years and had managed to at last get itself out of debt. Plans were made to increase the premiums. Good displays were prominent in all phases of the fair, and everyone seemed to be more at ease with the general conditions.

By 1867 horse racing had become a standard feature and the facilities were in need of up-grading. With the purchase of additional land from Mr. Marvel and Mr. Allen, a half-mile track was built and the area was fenced and graded. The Society's plans to sell some of its buildings (for removal to other sites) and further enlarge the racing ground fell through when they were unable to close the deal to buy more property. The Fair enjoyed excellent exhibits, particularly Mr. R.H. Morton's display of plows, harrows, cultivators, and other farm machinery.

Printed programs were available to Fair patrons for the first time in 1868. The ladies' displays of rugs, paintings, and assorted fancy work were larger than in several previous years. Among the other exhibits were 80 yokes of oxen and a carriage owned by Benjamin Lowell. To round out the activities, the Honorable F.O. Butler gave a stirring address.

The Fair of 1869 was originally scheduled for October 20-22. However, Mother Nature deluged the Franklin County area with heavy rain, washing out roads and bridges and causing heavy damage to the locality. The fairgrounds escaped unscathed, but postponement and poor traveling conditions cut rather severely into the overall attendance. The assorted problems caused by the heavy rains also diminished the number and the quality of the exhibits.

The 1870's began well for the Agricultural Society, bringing good weather and crowds that increased each year. Gate receipts increased accordingly (on one occasion total \$485 in one day), and the Society found itself in the fortunate situation of being not only clear of all debt but also enjoying a substantial balance in the bank! The Wilton Band provided entertainment for the fair patrons; they were joined in that regard toward the mid-70's by the Farmington Cornet Band. R.L. Morton continued to display his farm implements. George E. Dyer provided Mr. Morton with some close competition, receiving diplomas for both his stump extractor and his rock lifter.

Herman Corbett, a boy farmer, enlivened the 1874 Franklin County Fair with an exhibit of featuring several varieties of poultry never-before displayed in the area — Light Brahmas, Patridge Cochens, Buff Cochens, Leghorns, and Hamburgs. He received additional attention for the exceptional quality of his vegetable display. A.F. Hardy and George Mosher also rated excellent reviews of their individual vegetable exhibits. Records indicate that the Fair was very successful in 1874 with large numbers of sheep and horses being shown and the racetrack infield filled with family carriages, eating booths, and cedar stands.

Inevitably the increase in the size and scope of the Fair



Showing Steer.



Picnic in the racing infield.

spawned its own problems. As the crowds grew, so did the complaints of "vice and immorality". Gambling was in evidence within close proximity to the Exhibition Hall. Newspaper accounts relate the embarrassment of "people of good morals" by the yelling, shouting, and general commotion caused by the "dark people".

On Friday, October 13, 1876, following the final concert by the Farmington Band, many fair attendees entered the Exhibition Hall for a last look at the vast array of excellent displays both upstairs and down. Several people heard a crackling noise and shouted a warning to others in the vicinity. At that moment the second floor gave way and went crashing down 10 feet to the floor below. Fortunately the shouting had alerted many in the crowded building who managed to scramble out of the way of the collapsing floor, avoiding what might have been a terrible tragedy. Confusion was rampant. Dr. P. Dyer was in the immediate area and administered aid to the injured. While numerous people suffered from cuts, bruises, and sprains and others were treated for broken collar bones, shoulders, and arms, no one was seriously injured.

Records relating to the mid-1870's indicate that the Fair continued to be held in mid-October. The weather was, for the most part, favorable, and the crowds and exhibits remained about the same for several years.

In 1878 the lease on the land housing part of the Fairgrounds expired. One of the original owners (Mr. Marvel and Mr. Allen) had died and the lease could not be renewed. The Society bought the land bordering on High Street Extension, a tract of 18 acres. Once purchased, the property was properly fenced-in and used as a park. Captain Peter Tufts, Edward Hall, and Nathan Goodridge were most instrumental in supporting the Society, helping it to grow and prosper.

Following the terrible incident in 1876, the Society badly needed a new Exhibition Hall. Plans were drawn up to build a hall 100 feet long and 32 (or 34) feet wide, housing the Secretary's office in one corner and a water closet in the opposite corner! Membership tickets were available for the first time on a family bases — man, wife, and minor children.

Up to this point, no water had ever been available on the Fairgrounds—for man or beast. All water had to be hauled onto the grounds and kept in large holding tanks. Fair officials decided that the time had come to correct the situation by drilling wells on the property and working with the water company to eventually have town water piped in.

According to the newspaper reports in 1878, a Mr. Porter filed suit against the Society seeking damages for injuries suffered in the Exhibition Hall floor collapse in 1876.

In the early 1880's the fair enjoyed good exhibits and good crowds, and the weather cooperated in most instances. As the fair continued to grow, the trustees felt that a new building was needed. In 1884 a structure of 50 feet long, 36 feet wide, and 2 stories high was erected and used for the first time. Henry Sprague, Samuel Craig, and S.R. Leland were the people primarily responsible for getting this latest improvement built. The structure featured an entrance for the foot people between the old building and the new one. A new gate for teams was moved further South than before. The lower floor of the hall was used for farm produce displays, with a new roomy and convenient Secretary's office in the southern corner. The upstairs was reached by a broad stairway at each end of the hall and was used to display the ladies' handiwork as well as art and flower exhibits. The old hall became the primary site of machinery and vegetable exhibits. The Treasurer's office was in the end of the hall nearest the road.

With all these latest additions and improvements, the 1884

fair, held from October 7-9, enjoyed a very successful year with good attendance and fine exhibits.

As the 1880's continued the Society found itself in good condition. Premiums were increased; buildings were improved; the weather was generally cooperative. Occasional one-day postponements for inclement weather were accepted as the norm. Yet the Franklin County Fair was not without competition: the Allen's Mills, Phillips (started in 1852), and Strong Fairs continued to be well-attended annual events.

In 1885 and 1886 fair officials built new stalls for the speed horses as well as a new fence on the front of the racetrack. Also, new stalls 12 feet long, 7 feet wide, and 7 feet deep were constructed on the north side of the fairgrounds for housing cattle exhibits. Oxen and steers were very much the attraction at the Fair. The local newspapers mentioned particularly large showings from East North Farmington (now known as Mosher Hill) with teams from Ruben Hatch, Hiram Titcomb, John Backus, George Jennings, John Furbush, W. Henry Mosher, Horace Bump, and John Look.

In 1887, the Association voted to build a covered grandstand 100 feet long and 25 feet wide, featuring 9 rows of seats and housing booths and stalls to utilize the space beneath the seats. The overall cost was estimated at \$500-600. At the same time, sheds were to be built to accommodate 50-60 head of cattle. Available records indicate that approximately \$1000 was "hired" for the purpose of these improvements. In addition, the Society voted to purchase more land. The Lidstone lot north of the present fairgrounds — consisting of 9 rods on the road and 30 rods back was acquired for \$200. A Mr. Fred C. Perkins owned a parcel land between the Lidstone lot and the fairgrounds, so the Society decided to try to purchase that piece of property or, in the event that Mr. Perkins did not wish to sell, possibly swap part of the Lidstone property for the land adjacent to the fairgrounds.

The 1888 fair was a huge success following the completion of the new grandstand. Large numbers of animals were on exhibit. In addition to the usual displays, the Exhibition Hall boasted newly-purchased glass cases to house the dairy products and protect them from the dust and germs which were so prevalent at the fair. The fair receipts for the 3-day period was \$1381.

The rather dubious practice of "horse-swapping" was a very popular venture during the 1888 fair and came to the attention of Society officials from some unhappy people. Nathan Goodridge, one of the original members of the Agricultural Society, commented, "One horse has been swapped so many times that when he sees a stranger he automatically opens his mouth to show his teeth!!"

Growth continued when, in 1889, the Society voted to build yet another 2-story building (32 feet long and 24 feet wide) for use as horse stalls on the ground floor and livestock exhibits upstairs. The Judge's stand was spruced-up by the construction of a picket fence on each side. The horse racing aspect of the fair began to come into its own as the Association joined the National Trotting Association.

The early 1890's saw the Society prospering, with gate receipts up and over \$2,000 mark. The exhibits, in most cases, were of superior quality. With the heavy emphasis on horse racing and horse showing, the swapping and horse jockeying continued in full swing, leaving many individuals sadder, poorer, and hopefully wiser.

In 1891 the old building used to house the machinery exhibits was razed and replaced with a totally new building. The lumber from the old building was used to build a stable for the trotting horses. The Fair was held from September

FARMINGTON FAIR

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 11, 1917

Hot Races
E. R. Mearns
C. R. Mearns
Charles Traver
George Traver
Associate Judge
M. Nelson & Co. Lumb
Burt & Taylor
Gal Brown
Loren
Mason Racing Steward
Mason Racing C. Comm. Sec.
Alfred Gibbs
Philip Robinson
Mason Elevator
Fred B. Wain
L. P. M.
1:20 P. M.
Held at Washington Open
1:30 P. M.
Final Time

15c

Farmington Fair Association

7th Race

CLASSIFIED PACE
NON-WINNERS OF \$100

1	DEWICE	8032
2	THE JAGOT	8037
3	BURKEA HANOVER	8038
4	MASHFIELD	8039
5	HANOVER GOLD	8040
6	ROYAL PARADE	
7		
8		

9th Race

NON-WINNERS OF \$100

1	DEWICE	8046
2	WELLS'S CHIEF	8047
3	WELLS'S CHIEF	8048
4	WELLS'S CHIEF	8049
5	WELLS'S CHIEF	8050
6	WELLS'S CHIEF	8051
7	JERRY SPAGUE	8052
8		

10th Race

110 PACE CONDITIONAL
FIBRETE

1	ELDER HANOVER	8053
2	LEROY HANOVER	8054
3	LEROY HANOVER	8055
4	BIRCH HALL	8056
5	BOSSIE O	8057
6		
7		
8		

8th Race

110 PACE CONDITIONAL
FIBRETE

1	LEROY HANOVER	804
2	LEROY HANOVER	8042
3	LEROY HANOVER	8043
4	LEROY HANOVER	8044
5	LEROY HANOVER	8045
6		
7		
8		

1st Race

NON-WINNERS OF \$100
CLASSIFIED PACE

1	THE PATRIOT	8000
2	THE PATRIOT	8001
3	THE PATRIOT	8002
4	THE PATRIOT	8003
5	THE PATRIOT	8004
6	THE PATRIOT	8005
7		
8		

2nd Race

NON-WINNERS OF \$100
CLASSIFIED PACE

1	THE PATRIOT	8006
2	THE PATRIOT	8007
3	THE PATRIOT	8008
4	THE PATRIOT	8009
5	THE PATRIOT	8010
6	THE PATRIOT	8011
7		
8		

3rd Race

NON-WINNERS OF \$100
CLASSIFIED PACE

1	THE PATRIOT	8012
2	THE PATRIOT	8013
3	THE PATRIOT	8014
4	THE PATRIOT	8015
5	THE PATRIOT	8016
6	THE PATRIOT	8017
7		
8		

4th Race

NON-WINNERS OF \$100
CLASSIFIED PACE

1	THE PATRIOT	8018
2	THE PATRIOT	8019
3	THE PATRIOT	8020
4	THE PATRIOT	8021
5	THE PATRIOT	8022
6	THE PATRIOT	8023
7		
8		

5th Race

NON-WINNERS OF \$100
CLASSIFIED PACE

1	THE PATRIOT	8024
2	THE PATRIOT	8025
3	THE PATRIOT	8026
4	THE PATRIOT	8027
5	THE PATRIOT	8028
6	THE PATRIOT	8029
7		
8		

6th Race

NON-WINNERS OF \$100
CLASSIFIED PACE

1	THE PATRIOT	8030
2	THE PATRIOT	8031
3	THE PATRIOT	8032
4	THE PATRIOT	8033
5	THE PATRIOT	8034
6	THE PATRIOT	8035
7		
8		

SCORE CARD

Races at Franklin Park

AUGUST 13, 1919

Race	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1st								
2nd								
3rd								
4th								
5th								
6th								
7th								
8th								



Racing Crowd.

29-31. The premium list was revised so that the registered animals were paid higher premiums than the grade animals. Better livestock displays included 304 head of cattle, 163 sheep, and 27 brood mares and their colts. Steers sold for \$150 per pair.

When the fair opened in 1892, there were several new buildings. A row of sheds for the livestock had been built along the entire length of the grounds on the street — front. A row of sheds near the grandstand which had previously been used by the speed horses had been removed and replaced by dining halls. Due to a spate of cold weather, the gate receipts were not as good in 1892 as in the previous years. However, the exhibits were exceptional and more neatly arranged. Farmington Falls now boasted of its own band which entertained fair patrons who braved the cold. The Society's officers were: President, Curtis Hobbs; Vice President, Herman Corbett (the same fellow who had, as a boy farmer, enlivened the fair with his exceptional display of poultry in 1874); Secretary, Edward Hall; and Treasurer, George Currier. Along with these officers, the Association membership voted to have running water with suitable tanks installed in the park before September of 1893.

Following a very dry summer, the 1893 Franklin County Fair opened with its water system in place. The exhibition hall boasted exceptional handiwork displays, and large crowds enjoyed fine weather and good horse racing. The towns of Vienna and Mt. Vernon were admitted into the F.C.A.S.

As the Society approached the mid-1890's improvements to the grounds and buildings continued. The poultry had a new home under the racing grandstand, resulting in more and more exhibitors. By 1894 the cattle exhibits had grown at such a rapid pace that they were once again forced to hitch animals to the fences because of the inavailability of stall space.

A new arched entrance greeted the many exhibitors and patrons as they entered the 1885 Franklin County Fair. For the first time, the W.C.T.T. had their own building on the fair grounds, housing kitchen and eating facilities on the first floor and comfort facilities on the second floor. '85 also marked the beginning of what would become an annual event — the Baby Show — for which babies were registered in much the same manner as the livestock. A major new attraction was provided by the Franklin District Lodge of Good Templers; their large gaily-colored tent provided fair patrons with an excellent place to sit, socialize, and rest.

The 1896 Fair held from September 15-17. The grandstand had been moved eight feet west and enlarged by 25 feet on each end since the previous year in order to accommodate the large crowds of race fans. For the first time, winners in other classes were invited to parade their prize-winning animals in front of the grandstand. Bicycle races were held in addition to the usual horse and buggy races. It had been a rather extraordinary year for the apple crops so large displays were on hand in the Exhibition Hall. As had been the case for several years, Wheeler's Band provided entertainment for fair-goers.

In 1897 the Exhibition Hall was moved 60 feet closer to the main entrance of the grounds. A bandstand was erected in front of the grandstand. Changes to the grandstand included establishment of a ticket office on the North end as well as the setting aside of 75 feet for the poultry exhibits. On Wednesday the Granger's had a parade with a \$50 prize being given to the best group of over 20 people. Thursday featured a bicycle parade boasting over 40 elaborately decorated bicycles competing for a \$6 first prize and 4 smaller prizes. Wheeler's Band provided musical accompaniment during the bicycle competition. The Baby Show took place during the last afternoon of the Fair festivities.

It had been ten years since the Trustees had changed the Fair dates from October to September, feeling that the crops would be better at that time and the exhibits would be larger. Given the size and content of the exhibits during those ten years, apparently they had been correct.

The shantys that had been built along the fence were torn down in 1898. A new dining facilities building 125 feet long and 18 feet wide was erected on the south side of the Exhibition Hall. The space directly adjacent to the Exhibition Hall was reserved for the Secretary's Office, leaving more space available for exhibits in the Hall. The dining room at the north end of the Hall was converted to an Executive Office where the ladies might sit and relax in heat and comfort. The 1898 exhibits were excellent. Among the names appearing in the premium lists were: Chester Hamlin, H.J. Mosher, C.N. Gould, Miller, Oakes, Craig, Adams, Currier, etc.

Vaudeville became part of the program as the Franklin County Fair continued to grow and prosper and prepared to enter the Twentieth Century. Citing complaints of the lack of activity between one horse race and another, a stage was erected in 1899 and a Boston concern was hired to provide entertainment for the crowd during the time between races. The racetrack itself was brought into prime condition. Other improvements to the grounds included repair of the horse stalls, southern extension of the sheep sheds, and a new coat of paint on the Judge's stand.

Heavy rains caused postponement of one day of Fair, but as the weather cleared the crowds returned for the remainder of the week. Among the highlights of the horseracing activity in 1899, a ladies' race featured a horse that got totally out of control and almost broke a track record in the process before the beast was brought under control by his feminine rider. Later in the week one of the mens' races ended in a dead heat. Tempers flared and the drivers were expelled after they became abusive to one another as well as to race officials. All this excitement coupled with the addition to the vaudeville entertainment totally charmed and delighted the crowds!

A telephone was installed in the Secretary's office at a cost of \$5.00 for the use of the instrument. A contract was signed providing water for the fairgrounds at a cost of \$36 per year for a period of 10 years with the condition that the F.C.A.S. lay its own pipe.

The midway provided entertainment with its merry-go-round and assorted tented shows. Picture galleries and large displays of produce and stock gave fair-goers additional diversions.

In 1900 special trains offering excursion rates brought in people from many surrounding areas to attend the Fair and to enjoy its assorted exhibits and entertainment. Over 500 patrons came from Northern Franklin County alone. Rains marred some of the festivities, but skies cleared for the remainder of the Fair. Unfortunately, the summer weather had not been cooperative, and the produce displays were not up to the usual standards due to a poor growing season. However, the Baby Show was a great success. Dorothy Trefethan of Wilton was the lucky winner. Martha Jones of Farmington was one of the contestants. For the first time, a snow plow was on exhibit and its use was explained to many interested fair patrons.

Construction continued, and in 1901 there was shed space for an additional 141 head of cattle. As in the past, all shed spaces were filled and all available hitching spaces at the fence was taken. Temperance blossomed into full flower, and ALL drinks except coffee, tea, and water were summarily banned from the fairgrounds! People arrived from all directions by train, often transported by horse drawn wagons from the station to the fairgrounds. The locals ar-



Looking at Pulling Ring, left, and Exhibition Building, center, 1960's.



Somewhere on the Fairgrounds.

rived at the Fair by horse and wagon as well. These were parked inside the racetrack oval, where sometimes there were large picnics and family reunions. At times, the oval was so full that other areas had to be found for parking. Once again, rain presented a problem for those running the fair, but eventually all shows and programs were carried out. Vaudeville was once again very popular with horse racing fans. Milton Hatch was the starter of the races.

1902 was a banner year for the cattle exhibitors. All stalls were full, as were the fence spaces. 529 entries were received by the Secretary, but officials felt there were an additional 25 which had not been registered. Due to bad weather and an early frost, the vegetable displays were smaller than usual. The quality and quantity of the fancy work exhibits made up for the deficit in the produce area. One of the biggest crowds ever to come to Farmington Fair enjoyed the horse racing and vaudeville.

By 1903 additional buildings had been erected for use as dining facilities. They were not as substantial as those built previously, but they were deemed to be good enough for three days of annual use. Also, an addition had been built onto the grandstand to accommodate the racing fans.

For the first time, gasoline engines were on display. Large exhibits of flowers, fruit, and vegetables graced the Exhibition Hall. Chester Hamlin had an interesting exhibit of 25 Angora goats.

The Baby Show winners included Isabelle Whittemore, first place; Ellery Farmer, second place; and Bernice Sawtelle, third place. Bernice Millett (nee Crosby) and Bernard Buzzell were among the other contestants.

A couple of accidents managed to keep things lively. Several people were struck by a horse while walking in the midway; no one was seriously injured. A support pole came down on the merry-go-round causing several children to fall off their wooden horses; the children were frightened, scraped, and bruised slightly but otherwise uninjured.

In 1904 there were excellent crowds and several new attractions. All classes were full both in the cattle department and in the hall. The first day's weather was cloudy and threatening, but officials managed to complete the program. Despite the night's rain, carriage races were held on the second day of Fair on a damp and muddy racetrack, leaving it rough and rutted. The regular horsemen were extremely up in arms over this turn of events and complained bitterly to Fair officials. However, there was little that could be done and the horse racing continued as best it could given the circumstances.

The 1905 Fair was held in early October (as were the 1906 and 1907) boasted new coats of paint, and the damaged race track had been brought into A-One condition. The midway boasted more sideshows and crowd-drawing freaks, and the Exhibition Hall was full of the usual produce displays — all the things that guaranteed a successful and well-attended fair. In addition, artist Charles H. Sawyer displayed his painting, delighting people as much in 1905 as his art delights them in the 1980's. Wellington Thornton of Chester-ville was President of the Society while R.S. Sampson served as Secretary.

Records indicate that the 1906 was enormously successful: the weather was excellent; people attended by the thousands; and teams competed by the hundreds. There were 88 yoke of oxen — 17 of which were owned by Frank Blanchard with almost as many owned by Leforest Tufts. There were also some exceptionally fine race horses on the grounds, competing in races started by A.D. Horn. The exhibition Hall was unusually full of vegetables, many different types of ladies' handiwork, and numerous interesting trade exhibits.

Two days of rain preceded the opening of the 1907 Fair.

So, the dust was laid, the air was crisp, and the sun was shining on those October days of Fair in which large crowds enjoyed the full exhibits of cattle, sheep, poultry, swine, and assorted edible goodies. Special trains were still catering to those who were anxious to attend. It was estimated that during the three days of Fair, more than 10,000 people enjoyed the outstanding exhibits.

Apparently, some of those attending the Fair enjoyed more than the exhibits! Deputy Sheriff W.B. Small was kept busy for a day and a half pursuing "rum runners" from Lewiston. Once rounded-up, they were taken before Judge Locke who immediately "locked them up" in the County Jail and kept them out of circulation for the duration.

Rain postponed the first day of the 1908 Fair from September 29 to the 30th. The cattle sheds, beginning at the lower entrance way and extending the length of the grounds and across the lower end of the race track, were filled to overflowing. This is the first year that Eugene Luce's name was mentioned as being an exhibitor of Jersey's. The Exhibition Hall boasted a pumpkin weighing 65 pounds as well as displays of grapes and mammoth watermelon. Carl W. Robbins of North Chesterville had a handsome violin on exhibit which attracted a great deal of attention and admiration.

As in the previous year, rain delayed the opening of the 1909 Fair for one day. But the sun finally shone bright and clear, and the Fair got underway. Two events particularly entertained the crowds: the first was a balloon ascension—a real premier event for the Farmington area; later a white horse named Carlotta ran around the racetrack without a driver then later returned to race in earnest complete with sulky and driver. The exhibits in the Hall were not up to the usual standards since the summer drought had severely affected the crops that usually provided such wonderful displays.

When the Fair opened on September 27, 1910, the cattle shed was purportedly the largest in the state for this kind of structure (1260 feet long, containing 160 stalls, 16' x 8'), yet it was unable to accommodate all the animals brought in for exhibit. The Exhibition Hall was filled to capacity even though it had been enlarged to provide more space for farm produce on the first floor and fancy work, paintings, and additional handicrafts on the second. The Grange exhibits in the Hall were outstanding. Farmington Grange won first prize with Llewellyn Norton at Master; Wilson Grange of East Wilton took home second prize. The midway was larger than ever and well-filled with all kinds of rides, games, and side shows for the enjoyment of the eager Fair patrons. The horse races were still a large priority and a genuine drawing card with the vaudeville and band entertainment augmenting the racing itself.

C.F. Blanchard was Society President; Carlow Scott served as Secretary; and George Currier was Treasurer. The enormous crowds left the Society's treasury with a large surplus.

The Franklin County Agricultural Society Fair of 1911 was termed as one of the best in the state of Maine. The cattle sheds were filled and overflowing by more than 100 head; the racing featured some of the best horses in the State. Special trains still brought people from the outside towns. The Old South Church had an eating booth and did a big business serving dinners, clearing over \$200 for the Church coffers for their efforts. Howard Gould was President.

The large crowds arriving at the 1912 Fair by excursion train, horse and carriage, and motor car found several changes. The grounds had been enlarged at both the north and south ends; stalls had been built to provide for an additional 50 head of cattle; a new gateway had been constructed which allowed cars and carriages to enter the

racetrack oval without having to pass through the crowds; and the water lines had been extended to provide additional sanitary toilet facilities for Fair patrons. In spite of cold weather the trains were filled with folks from north and south eager to get to the fairgrounds. The advent of the motor car was much in evidence as one curious soul counted as many as 80 automobiles parked in the racetrack oval along with the usual wagons and carriages.

The midway continued to offer new and different attractions, and the Baby Show still created a lot of interest. As usual, the horse racing was popular.

Exciting and interesting things were going on in the Exhibition Hall: Herman Corbett showed 325 varieties of produce that could be grown in Franklin County, featuring fruits, vegetables, grains, and herbs. One of the Granges featured a novel exhibit of sculptured butter! Schools were invited to participate, and the youngsters provided some wonderful displays of produce; the Norton Flat and East Wilton students were recognized for their exceptional displays.

A new infield fence was completed at the racetrack in time for the opening of the 1913 Franklin County Fair. The cattle shows continued to attract both a large field of exhibitors and large crowds of admirers. The grounds boasted 1700 feet of sheds, and the 1913 records indicate that 120 yoke of oxen and 800 head of cattle were shown. The poultry exhibits also continued to be popular.

The midway offered a variety of diversions and attractions including strange and exotic animals, fortune tellers and palmists, and the much-loved and now-long-gone 10-cent ride on the merry-go-round.

Through the years Farmington had continued to gain a reputation for hosting the best fair in the state of Maine. This reputation was further enhanced by Maine's Commissioner of Agriculture, S.A. Roberts, who stated publicly that the Franklin County Fair, with its superior livestock and produce exhibits and excellent horseracing, was the best fair in the state.

The outbreak of hostilities in Europe had little or no effect on the 1914 Fair. The railroads continued to provide inexpensive transportation for fair enthusiasts from all over the state, and the Society continued to update its facilities to provide the necessary amenities for the large crowds. Auto traffic was regulated at the gates, greatly relieving congestion and resulting in an accident-free year. Eating establishments did a big business.

Charles Norton displayed five handsome pianos in the Exhibition Hall and provided a soloist who entertained the crowds as they walked through the building and enjoyed the beautiful displays.

A midget and a fat lady greatly delighted the midway audiences. The Motor Dome appeared for the first time, featuring two motorcycles defying gravity and racing at break-neck speed around, up, and down a vertical wall.

1915 was basically a duplicate of years past. The cattle and farm produce exhibits were large and of superior quality, and large crowds continued to flock to the fairgrounds.

While America continued to be drawn slowly and inexorably into the conflict raging in Europe, the Franklin County Fair was 'business as usual' in 1916. In fact, records indicate that it was perhaps the largest and most orderly fair held up to that point. Frank Blanchard was President of the Society while George Clark and Charles Pierce served as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

Enormous crowds came from near and far to enjoy the cattle show, an Exhibition Hall full of produce and handicrafts, and a large midway with attractions to please and amuse both young and old. The racetrack provided its own particular brand of excitement for racing devotees, and the

vaudeville acts between racing heats kept the large crowds entertained.

On the local front, the ladies from both the Baptist and the Old South Congregational churches had eating booths. Local schools and some church-sponsored Sunday schools had interesting exhibits.

For the first time and in a rather unusual way, World War I appeared to finally have an effect on the Franklin County Fair. Wool prices were rising, and more people were raising sheep. The result was an unusually large sheep show in 1917.

The appearance of the New York Cabaret Girls caused a whooping sensation of its own. Looking back, it now seems likely that the arrival of the Cabaret Girls at Farmington Fair was the precursor of what would eventually evolve, for better or worse, into the "girlie shows".

Taken as a whole, the 1917 Fair was a monetary and agricultural success. In addition to the sheep show, there was an equally large poultry display, and the grandstand for the oxen and horse pulling events was filled to capacity. One tent exhibited the latest gadgetry for the twentieth century farmer: a cream separator.

Receipts totaled over \$7,000, leaving the Society to contemplate a solution to its parking problems. Although the trains provided transportation for many fair-goers, large numbers continued to arrive by automobile so parking was, indeed, at a premium inside the racetrack oval. In an effort to eliminate the almost constant flow of traffic going one way or another across the racetrack, someone suggested building a subway which would take traffic under the racetrack and into the oval as well as enable the stables to be moved nearer the track. Given the logistical problems of this suggestion, no plans were made in the hope that other solutions might be found.

Several large changes were obvious when the Fair opened a day late on September 25, 1918. The racing stables had been moved and built on the south-western corner of the grounds. The pulling ring was brought closer to the north turn of the racetrack. A new automobile entrance had been built at the north end of the grounds, and, as a means of relieving congestion at the "home stretch", a new entrance was provided for driving into the racetrack oval. Inclement weather forced a postponement from September 24 to the 25th. However, road conditions remained so poor that only a very few hardy souls were able to attend the opening day.

In addition, World War I was taking its toll on the Exhibition Hall displays. Farmers were experiencing no small difficulty getting help to work their fields and harvest their crops, and seed and fertilizer prices were high. An early frost was just one more blow to an already-below-par harvest; the Hall displays reflected these difficulties. The ladies' fanciwork displays were much smaller than in previous years as they were now devoting their time and talents to knitting utilitarian garb for the Red Cross to ship to foreign shores rather than producing the one-of-a-kind needlework items that won prizes and admiration at the Fair.

The seating collapsed at one of the sideshows, resulting in bruises and minor injuries. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt, and within a short time, it was business as usual.

In spite of these problems, there were some very positive aspects to the 1918 Fair. The cattle exhibitors came out in droves, and the sheep and poultry exhibits boasted large numbers. The midway featured more attractions than ever, and the racing purses were now paying \$150-200 to those fortunate enough to make it to the Winner's Circle.

The Trustees continued to scratch their heads for a solution to the parking situation. Some thought that an overhead

crossing might be preferable to the subway concept. Again, all plans were placed on hold.

In spite of rather heavy rains, the 1919 Fair opened on its designated day, Tuesday, September 23rd, and the scheduled events were held as planned. While the reason remains unclear, many fair-goers erroneously thought that Wednesday was a free admission day; people arrived in droves. It was estimated that 12,000 people attended, resulting in huge gate receipts for the Society and automobiles parked anywhere and everywhere.

Thursday was scheduled to be Governor's Day — a red letter day for the Franklin County Agricultural Society. Patrons started arriving as early as 7 AM and continued arriving until the attendance numbers exceeded those of the previous day! Many of those in attendance were wearing military uniforms, a reminder that the War continued although hopes were high that an Allied victory was at hand. Governor Carl Milliken and his party arrived at 2:00 PM, escorted by a marching band. The Governor addressed a large audience from a platform in front of the grandstand; unfortunately only those standing closest to him were able to hear what he had to say.

Machinery displays were in evidence in the racetrack oval. Among the items most admired were maple syrup equipment, milking machines, tractors, trucks, and — a new item — lightning rods.

The pulling and horseracing were up to the usual Farmington Fair standards and above the standards of the other Maine Fairs. Once again, the cattle, sheep, and poultry exhibits were extraordinary. Two local young people, Cedric Ranger and Wesley Gardiner, received special notice for their exceptional Exhibition Hall displays.

The 1920 Fair enjoyed three days of perfect weather. The Trustees had been fit to move the Fair dates back from late September to mid-September. This change would continue through the years so that milder weather (not to mention an occasional hurricane!) might be in order.

The prevailing sentiment was that the "good old days" of the Agricultural Fair had passed and that Farmington Fair had become, for all intents and purposes, a carnival. While the crowds came in ever-greater numbers, the main attraction was the midway instead of the produce exhibits. The 1888 Fair had boasted 800 plates of apples and pear displays and a modest midway as compared to the present fair with only 100 plates of a similar display and a midway with shows and attractions of many kinds that seemed to make up for all the Exhibition Hall lacked.

In spite of this sentiment, the numbers of cattle, sheep, pulling and racing horses had increased steadily in 30 years, and the Society reigned as the supreme livestock show in the state of Maine. The cattle exhibits were by all accounts superb. Unfortunately, the poultry display was smaller than usual (although certainly larger than those 30 years previous) since certain breeds had recently been infected by disease and their numbers substantially reduced as a result.

In an effort to inform and assist the farmers and gardeners, the Maine Department of Agriculture hosted an interesting display of machinery exhibits all over the grounds featuring interesting innovations in farming as well as other aspects of Maine life. A J-1 bi-plane, featuring a wingspread of 44 feet and a 90 horsepower engine, was on hand to fly over the fairgrounds, thrilling and entertaining all who were able to see it.

The parking crunch was solved in 1921 with the purchase of a large tract of land opposite the fairgrounds. In addition, some of the sheep pens were enlarged, fences were repaired, new signs as well as three flag poles were put up, and the toilet facilities under the grandstands were updated.

The Fair opened to cool weather and dusty grounds. Nighttime showers settled the dust, and the sun shone on the second day of Fair. Governor Percival P. Baxter attended for several hours and was reportedly greatly impressed with the high quality of the exhibits and displays. Maine had experienced rather a severe drought during the summer months, but neither the livestock nor the crops seemed to have suffered greatly as the displays were of the usual high standards. The poultry exhibitors were back in force, apparently recovered from the disease problems that had depleted their stock in 1920.

The Baby Show featured 21 entries and was still as popular as in previous years. The trade shows and machinery exhibits were attention-getters and included furniture displays for the first time.

Traffic seemed to be the main problem plaguing Fair officials. However, local and country law officers were able to handle the situation in an efficient manner.

The 83rd Franklin County Fair opened in 1922, boasting numerous improvements and changes. The grounds had been subjected to a general clean-up to insure a better atmosphere for the ever-increasing crowds. In addition, the Trustees had purchased six acres of land north of the fairgrounds and had added an 8-foot fence around the entrance to the gate on Maple Avenue (formerly called Quarry Street). This area, as well as a newly-acquired 10-acre auto park on the west side of High Street opposite the main entrance, was to be used for parking. Fourteen cattle stalls had been moved to a more convenient location, bringing the length of the sheds to 1700 feet. Two more eating booths had been built.

Extraordinary, all entries in all classes of exhibits were filled. The Baby Show was again well-attended. The largest attraction was probably the automobile show which featured the latest models.

A large midway featured the usual rides as well as a wide array of freak shows, soothsayers, and games of chance.

1923 found the cattle transferred to the north end of the grounds. All sheds were filled with 312 head of cattle in the new facilities, 70 housed in the old sheds, and 34 tied to fences. Mr. Herbert M. Tucker, Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry, stated that no where else in the state does a county turn out the quality and quantity that Franklin County does on a routine basis. In several of that cattle diversions, special prizes and cups were being awarded on the basis of having to be won over a period of years in order to keep the award. The thinking behind these particular awards was that they would insure competition for future years.

While growing conditions had been less than ideal, the displays of garden produce were never better. Upstairs, the Exhibition Hall was full of truly beautiful needlework, paintings, and flowers. The judges were hard put to make their final selections for the winners in many divisions.

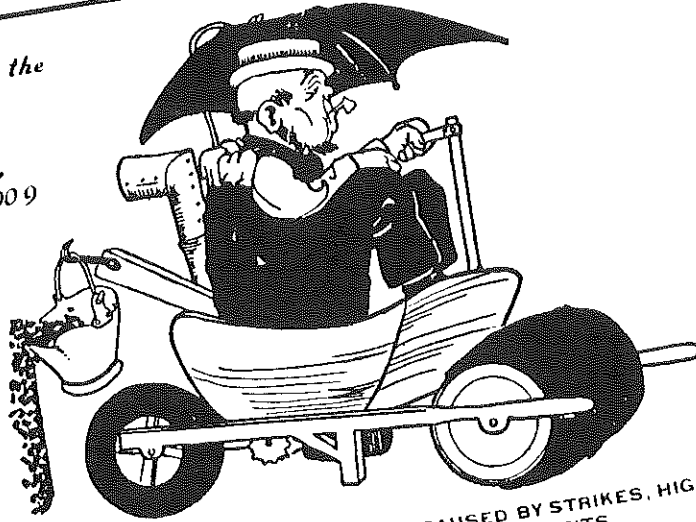
Once again, the trade exhibits were numerous. Automobiles continued to be the most popular items.

The first day of the 1924 Fair was handicapped by inclement weather, but the quality of the exhibits made up for the deficit in the weather. The second day produced an attendance record. The eating booths did an especially big business, and other areas of the Fair seemed to run smoothly. The Red Cross tent was a great convenience for the public as they assisted those with problems or medical difficulties. Mrs. E.B. Bachelder — affectionately known to many as "Auntie Bach" — was in charge of the booth.

The Baby Show had 17 entries, and the trade shows were very much in evidence with many diverse exhibits.

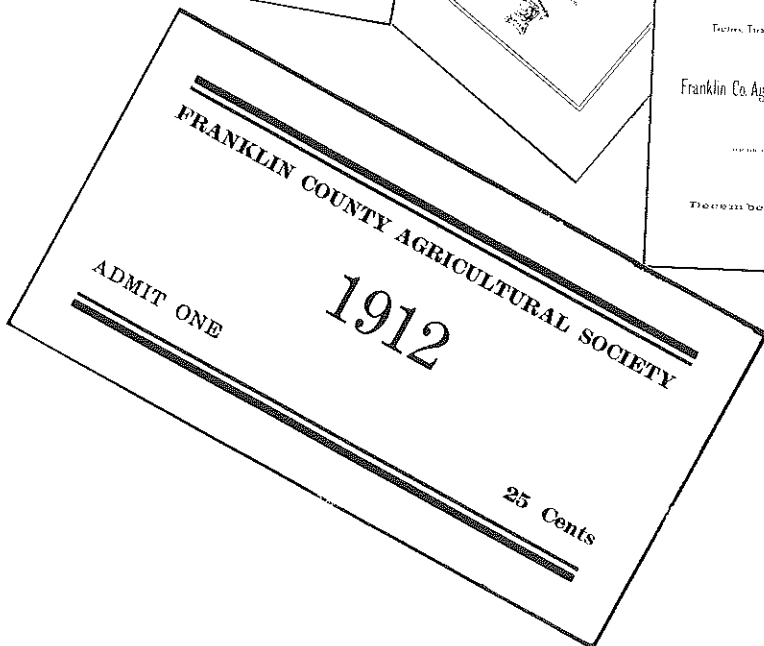
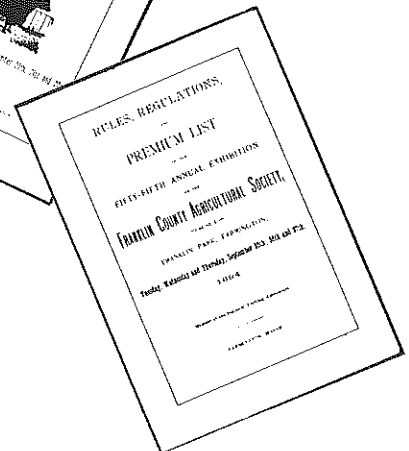
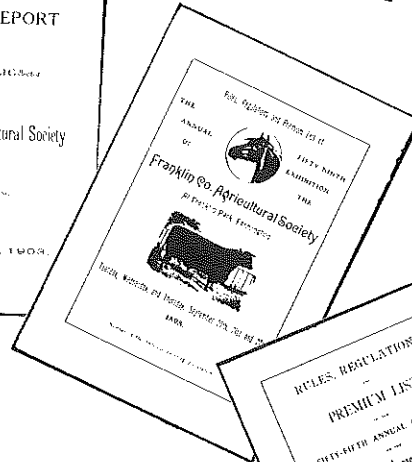
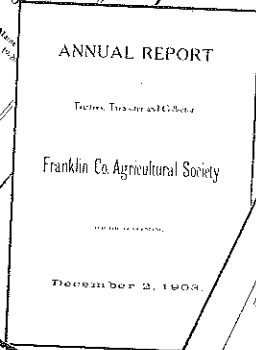
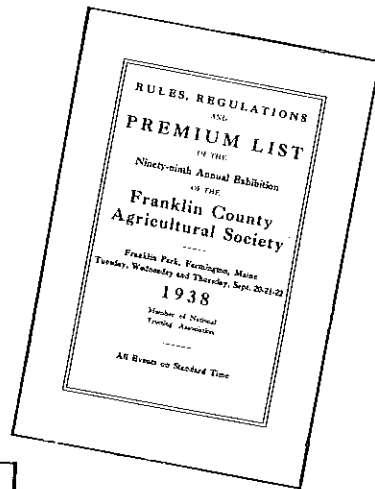
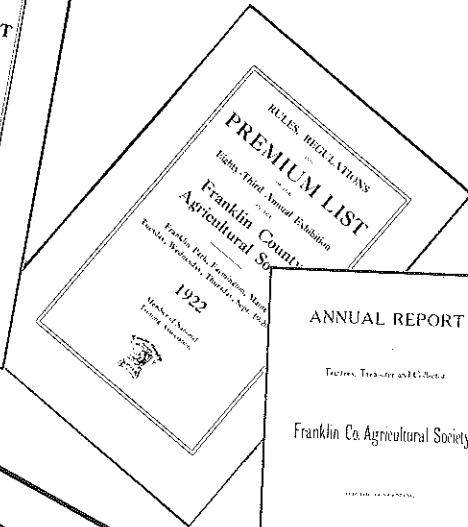
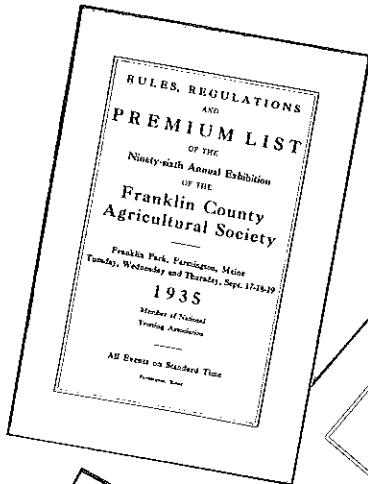
One area of wide dissention and discussion focused around the use of tickets. It had come to the attention of

You Auto go with Me to the
Franklin County
Agricultural Fair,
Farmington, Maine,
September 28 to 30, 1909



ALL ARRIVALS SUBJECT TO DELAY CAUSED BY STRIKES, HIGH
WATER, MEASLES AND OTHER ACCIDENTS
BEYOND OUR CONTROL

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the Trustees that people were paying to enter the Fair, receiving a re-entry pass when they left, and giving their re-entry pass to others in order to save them the ticket fee. Therefore, the rules were changed: anyone who left the grounds would have to pay to re-enter. This new rule came under loud and vehement protest from those who were refused re-entry passes. Nonetheless, the Trustees and the new policy prevailed.

1925 was the 85th year of the Franklin County Agricultural Society. It was duly noted that what had once been a small cattle show at the center meeting house for 18 years, moving to a small grounds on Norton Flat for several more years before constructing its first building at a cost of \$700 (and putting the Society into debt to the tune of \$1,215.) was now one of the best fairs in the state, featuring cattle and sheep exhibits that are shown and known all over Maine. Herbert J. Mosher served as President during this commemorative year.

Horse racing continued to be a big event at the Fair with a special appearance on the final day by the wonder horse, John R. Braden, who was also known as the 'guideless wonder'. He broke the track record by completing the mile in 2:05.

The automobile tent was 300 feet long and 30 feet wide, housing 43 cars which ranged in price from \$445 to \$5,256. There were trade exhibits of furniture, pianos, novelties, and even one of furs by Nathan Burbank.

As usual, the midway provided entertainment for the entire family; the Baby Show delighted one and all; and the vaudeville company, starring a band called St. Rose, filled the stage and the air with music and song.

1926 ushered in some changes in the Exhibition Hall. New glass-topped cases were installed for the display of fanciwork, making it easier to see, simpler to group, and less likely to become soiled.

Skies were cloudy, but the crowds came in large numbers. Most of the Fair patrons were orderly and dignified; those who were not were quickly ushered to the exits by officials.

Large livestock exhibits seemed to highlight the Fair. F.N. Blanchard showed more than 25 pair of oxen, while a number of other individuals showed several pair. There had been 30 feet added to the poultry shed, allowing ducks and geese to be displayed along with the usual poultry exhibits. The dairy and beef shows were up to the usual high standards with 604 head being shown. Plans were afoot to replace the judge's stand with a more modern structure.

The Baby Show and the trade exhibits continued to be among the favorite features of the Fair. Ear protectors made by Chester Greenwood sparked much interest in Fair patrons, as did the enamel cookware which was made in Stratton. The band and the vaudeville troupe continued to provide entertainment during the intervals between horseracing heats.

September 20-21-22, 1927, Levi Mosher was President and Frank Knowlton was Secretary. The weather was good and the crowds bigger than ever, it was estimated these were either in or around the grounds over 1,000 cars and no accidents. The cattle shows were of the same good quality with some new exhibitors in several breeds. Mildred Ross's heifer "Kings Fair Louise" had won prizes at several fairs and here in the 4H show for the past 3 years, which also won them a trip to Springfield Massachusetts, to the exhibition. The racing was very good but was marred by several accidents but none were serious. The show horse division was so large it was felt there needed to be some adequate housing provided for them. Apparently the summer weather had not been conducive to good growing conditions but the displays in the hall were good, especially the apple display. Farm

displays by Elvin Jones, Claire Mosher, and Arthur Corbett were exceptional. In the fancy work a quilt made half a century ago contained 3,258 squares.

In 1928 there had been several new improvements, new stalls for the race horses, the judges stand had been rebuilt along with the vaudeville stage and toilet facilities, which were much appreciated by the personnel. The usual exhibits both in the hall and cattle departments were of the usual high quality, especially the grange exhibits. The racing was good, but there was an accident that broke a driver's leg, so some of the other drivers went through the patrons on the grandstand and raised over \$200 for his medical expenses. Apparently the Red Cross had erected a building which they shared with the newly formed W.C.T.U., they also provided sitters outside for the weary and elderly. It was rumored that there would have to be a building for the auto's as the tent rental was so high, and in time would save money.

To reminisce the old Court House where the first fairs were held was a tall square building, painted white, this acted as a meeting house, town house and court house, probably near where the court house is today, but later it was moved down onto Pleasant Street where it was used for other purposes and in the fire of 1886 it was burned with a lot of the rest of the town.

When the Fair opened in September 18-19-20, 1929 the patrons found some changes, 65 feet had been added to the Exhibition Hall, thus joining the woman's building and rest rooms together, also large doors had been put in to accommodate the people having exhibits inside. On Tuesday and part of Wednesday it either rained or was cloudy but the people came just the same in large numbers. The exhibits were of high quality and in most instances the classes were full. People from outlying towns were now exhibiting more, a large floral display from Kingfield was much enjoyed, Lindley Foss had a display of 60 different kinds of glads. The Baby Show continued to draw much attention, and the trade exhibits were well patronized. A new improvement was the amplying system which was used in several places much to improve the crowds pleasure, especially at the racing. It was suggested by some that the cattle be kept for the three days, but this is to be taken into consideration as the time and cost would mean quite a lot of extra work to the owners and the fair workers.

In 1930 for some reasons the bands that usually entertained were not present, probably because the amplying system had its own records to use, but the patrons protested rather loudly. In spite of the Depression that was being felt in the country the people here turned out in goodly numbers and the exhibits were of the same good quality as always. The racing was especially good with split heats and some near misses as far as accidents were concerned, much to the enjoyment of the crowds attending. Pulling was drawing bigger crowds too, and they showed much enthusiasm for their favorite teams. A good year in spite of the hard times.

September 22-23-24, 1931, found Wheeler's Band back for each afternoon, although the 'canned music' was used at other times. The vaudeville was especially good as times were rather slow in the cities and the people needed to work even though it was only on a fair circuit. There was also a polio scare here in Franklin County that probably some away but the Baby Show was well attended. Rain and cloudy weather did not help too much. The quality of the cattle shown was the best for many years with large displays in most classes, oxen and steers especially. The pulling ring was open to the state so that drew bigger crowds than usual. Clyde Wheeler, the new Supt. of the grounds, had 125 concessions to deal with. An added attraction on the race track were 2 beautiful saddle horses owned by Elizabeth Arden

and exhibited for the pleasure of the people. The police kept the grounds free from trouble while the Perham Pine Tree concessions provided the entertainment on the midway. Due to the country conditions and the weather the Treasurer, Jarvis Tyler, felt the Fair should 'break even'.

In 1932 even the depression could not take away the spirit of the fair as people came in great numbers to see the best exhibits of cattle, sheep, poultry, and other things that had been shown in a long time. The beef, oxen and steers were plentiful and the pulling was quite exceptional. In the hall Cripal Lake Grange took the blue ribbon with three others close behind as the judges books showed only 1 point difference in the scoring of each. This seemed to be the way with all the other exhibits they were so good. The Baby Show was now divided into classes, in one the 6 months to 12 months, while the other was up to 6 months of age. The Red Cross was on hand in case of accidents. The officials felt that it was a very good fair in spite of the conditions outside.

In 1933 the only improvement to the grounds and buildings was a new tin roof on the exhibition building. Tuesday was not a good day, weatherwise, but the people came in goodly numbers to see the usual large display of show cattle, some new names were added to the exhibitors so most of the classes were full. The races were rained out. Wednesday's weather wasn't much better, yet people came and found a hall full of displays of farm products, art, flowers, and fanciwork. Trade exhibits by the local merchants are a real asset to the fair, as well as to themselves. The auto exhibits went beyond anyone's expectations of 20 years ago. Wheeler Band, under the direction of William Minir was a great crowd pleaser.

In 1934, September 18-19-20, the weather did not cooperate so Tuesday's events were set over to Wednesday, and Thursday which were good, as was Friday when some events took place. It was estimated there were over 1000 cattle on the grounds and even the weather could not keep the crowd from enjoying these events which were probably the largest and best ever in the fair's history. There had been a drought during the summer but the exhibits in the hall did not show a lack of water as most of them were of exceptional quality. The races were very good, having a wet track did not seem to discourage some of the horses, although by Friday when the races were completed it was felt everyone had their fair share. Walter Mosher was President, Lynn Savage was Vice President, Frank Knowlton was Secretary, and Jarvis Tyler was Treasurer. In spite of everything it was turned a very successful fair.

In 1935 the parimutual betting which was prevalent at other fairs, was brought up by the fair officials and was voted down, of course there was much dissention among the racing fans, but when the fair opened a good field of horses appeared for racing so that the classes were full. There was a change in the racing fees which was advantageous to the horse and owner. The usual exhibits of livestock and farm and home produce pleased the crowds that attended.

In 1936 there was still no parimutual betting at the races, and the classes still were full. Again the crowds came in large numbers and the exhibits were as large as usual. The poultry division was so large it was felt more space was needed and better accommodations. The trade exhibits showed some new time and work savers, which pleased the people. The Baby Show was discontinued, which did not please some people. Also it was rumored that the fair should expand to four days, as people could not get to see all of the activities in the 3 days as several things were scheduled at the same time, so time will tell how this works out.

The 1937 fair opened in September 21-22-23. People found quite a few repairs had been made, especially to the fences and to some of the buildings, also to the delight of

many there were evening vaudeville shows. The usual good exhibits of cattle, poultry, swine, and hall exhibits of farm and household were of the usual good quality. The midway was the best ever, it was put on by Art Lewis and came here from the Oxford Co. Fair in 8 railroad cars. Freddie Ditmar and the American Legion had the Beano concessions, also some individuals had their own stands for food and games. Even though there was no betting the races still were very good and drew good crowds.

In 1938, neither the Depression or recession kept the fair from opening with it's usual displays. Tuesday, September 20, was a good day for the cattle showing and there were a lot of them. Wednesday was a good day and Gov. Barrows attended for a while, going to the races. The American Legion Junior Bugle and Drum Corp. entertainment, then it started to rain, accompaniment by the hurricane winds that during the night flattened the auto tent along with some others, the cars had previously been moved to safer places. Thursday was rained out as was part of Friday, but the rest of the scheduled events went on as advertised. On Saturday night Irving Carver of the Shell Oil Company of Bethel provided fireworks for everyone's enjoyment. In spite of everything that took place the judges said the hall displays were by far the best they had seen in the state. But for the fair officials this was one of the worst ever as far as the weather was concerned, although the crowds were good.

In 1939, Franklin County Agricultural Society celebrated its 100th anniversary, and people were reminded of its humble beginnings and at times the struggle to keep going but by the exhibits and displays it had proved to be a very worthwhile undertaking for the community. There was still no betting but the racing proved to be very good and drew good crowds. There were 1300 birds in the poultry exhibit with cattle and other livestock as plentiful. The Cohman Brothers provided one of the biggest midways with something for everyone's enjoyment. Vaudeville was a success as well as the night shows which closed with a thrill show by Capt. Jimmy Smith.

The hall was exceptional and the head of the State of Maine Dept. of Agriculture, H.M. Tucker sent a letter complimenting the Society on their exhibits and the high quality of animals and produce shown. The new models of 1940 cars were exhibited and proved to be a great hit with the public. 1940, September 17-18-19, was cloudy on Tuesday but still there was one of the biggest displays of cattle in the state, also a large poultry exhibit. Fred Wheeler had 24 pair of oxen for the oxen classes and town teams, while others of the area had good displays. There was a very good poultry exhibit which filled the grandstand area. The hall held the usual grange, farm and fanciwork displays. Wednesday was an especially big day with the midway to please everyone. There was still no betting allowed but the racing was good as was the crowd to enjoy the vaudeville offered. Again the auto tent was a big attraction and showed the people the new cars for 1941.

In 1941 the State decided to step in and take better command of the fair situation. So the State Police came in to police the grounds, all fairs were to clean up "or to lose their state stipends". There was to be no liquor on the grounds, no gambling was allowed, immoral shows were closed down and taken from the grounds. In spite of these new rules and personnel there was a big display of cattle in all kinds and classes, the poultry show had it's usual good showing, the auto tent was full of all models of cars, there was a new display of turkey's which seemed to draw much attention. On the way from another fair there was a bad accident which killed the driver of the truck and put two of the midway rides out of commission, so the midway was smaller than past years. Beano suffered from the state rul-

ings so it was renamed "5 in a row" but played about the same. Jimmie Lynch and his Death Dodgers was a big attraction for the last night of fair and drew a big crowd from far and near.

In 1942, September 22-23-24, we found our nation at war, but people apparently needed some recreation and respite from the every day news, as they came to the fair in large numbers to enjoy a good showing of the livestock, the pulling of cattle, the racing of horses, which was above the average of the past years. There was also vaudeville to be enjoyed between heats and Wheeler's Band gave a concert on two of the evenings. There were 634 cattle on the grounds for either show or pulling purposes. There was a Red Cross tent to tend to the people's needs and 31 people took advantage of this facility.

On August 24, 1943, the Trustees of the fair discussed the country's situation. With many of the men and boys in the way they unanimously voted, due to the country's condition and gasoline shortage, the people's efforts would be more effective to stay on their jobs in the mills, etc. than to take time off for fair. Due to war conditions there was no fair in 1943 and anyone purchasing tickets was either to be refunded or to turn the 1943 ticket in for the 1944 ticket.

In 1944 the fair resumed with 3 days of fair but with 5 days of racing as it had been voted to join the parimutual circuit, the racing proved to be good but a different class of people attended, but the revenue from the parimutual windows tallied a take in of \$100,000. The cattle show was smaller and the hall display was about as usual but limited in some areas. The count in town was a busier place than usual as there were many intoxication cases to come before the judge. There also seemed to be more accidents, most of them minor, but kept the officials busy, also other law infractions. The pulling was above the average and drew large crowds. After a year's lay off the fair seemed to come back to its usual standards.

In 1945, September 18-19-20 for the fair, but still had 5 days of racing. One attraction before the fair was Maurice Sedgley of Strong driving 15 head of cattle from his home to the fairgrounds. The weather was cool and rained most every night. There were more dairy cattle with same new exhibitors, but fewer beef cattle and oxen were shown. The racing was good so the pari mutual take exceeded last years.

On August 12, 1946 the Franklin County Agriculture Society suffered the loss of two cattle sheds, by fire. It is thought that someone tossed a cigarette into the shed, thereby igniting the refuse of hay, or straw into a fire. Percy Gould, who lived nearby saw the smoke and tried to put out the small fire, but it traveled too fast, and in spite of the fire department it consumed 2 sheds, 270 feet long by 25 feet wide, before it was extinguished. Later the officers Chester Hamlin, President; John Pillsbury, Vice President; Frank Knowlton, Secretary; and Jarvis Tyler, Treasurer; along with the Trustees decided to hold the fair as usual and get two large tents to house the cattle usually housed in the burned out barns. The horse racing department felt they needed more room so a piece of land bordering the fairgrounds on the South side, 150 feet wide was bought from Elden Hall for \$150 and a life time membership. So September 17-18-19-20, found the fair going on as usual, the weather was good, so large crowds came to enjoy the cattle show, pulling, the fine exhibits in the hall, the racing, vaudeville and on the last night Jimmy Lynch and his Dare Devil auto show. This was the first year of four days of fair and the fine days of racing, and proved to be a huge success.

In 1947 the fair continued for four days, September 16-17-18-19, and was one of the biggest events in the fair history. The members saw several new things. There was a blackboard on the exhibition building and Nathan Bur-

bank wrote a news bulletin each day, which had weather, events, and items of interest. The usual exhibits were on display in the cattle department and in the hall. Two of the stanch supporters of the fair had passed away, G. Milton Hatch, a reporter of the cattle department, also Fred Wheeler, an exhibitor and supporter for many years, the fair noted their passing. The starting gate for horse racing was used for the first time on the second day of fair. The Red Cross booth had two attendants and due to the hot weather it was a very busy place. For the first time in the history of the fair a girl was a contestant in the pulling ring, Eleanor Holbrook of New Vineyard pulled her pair of oxen and won 4th place. For improvements a new wire fence had been erected along the front of the grounds, this was topped by a few strands of barbed wire hoping to deter those who hoped to attend the fair, but not by the main gate!

In 1948, September 21-22-23-24 the fair opened with over 1000 head of cattle on the grounds and all were raised in this county, the weather was cold but there was so much to see and so much going on the people did not seem to mind it. The hall was full of farm produce and handicraft, the grange had split their exhibits, with a booth for the vegetables and canned goods and one for the serving and hand work. Charles Mallony had an outstanding farm display. There was a new pulling grandstand and was full for all of those events. Some new reporters for the fair were Norman Ness for livestock and Emma Mahoney for the hall, replacing Milton Hatch and Levis Chapman.

1949 found the four days of fair to be held in good weather. There were some new cattle sheds to replace those burned and some extras to accomodate the large amount of cattle being shown. For the first time there was a woman race driver, Mrs. Rowdy Boy, who was 18 years old, both proved to be a crowd pleaser. Polly Small was the winner in the 4H Baby Beef show. A horse show was held on Friday and Miss Maine presented the trophy's. The usual cattle displays and hall displays pleased to large crowds that attended. An accident on the corner of Maple Avenue and High Street held up traffic for a while as people were leaving to go home, a car and a truck came to gather tipping over, Austin Hodgkins was the driver of one and was hurt, but not severely and the others were a couple from Canton, they were taken to the hospital but were not in critical condition.

1950, September 19-20-21-22 were four days of fair and 5 days of racing closing with the Jimmy Lynch Auto show. A special attraction was a 1000 lb. turtle that had been caught off Rockland. For the first time there was a double midway with mostly girly shows on the back avenues. Pari mutual was drawing big crowds to the races as the betting was quite heavy. Wilson Grange won 1st prize with the others very close in scoring. Clare Mosher had an outstanding farm exhibit, there was a big showing of apples. The upstairs was full of fancy work, flowers, paintings, and other things to please the eye. On the race track in the 8th race there was an accident in which Robert Dill, 74 of Dixfield, was thrown from his sulkey, he picked himself up and walked to the stable where he collapsed and died. In the 9th race there was another accident but no one was seriously hurt, but these rather marred the afternoon. On Saturday the Sandy River Riding Club sponsored a horse show which proved to be very popular and drew a large crowd.

In 1951, September 18-19-20-21 the weather was most cooperative and the crowds good, a big display of cattle pleased the people. Farmington Grange won the blue ribbon for their exhibit and Farmington Band played for the enjoyment of the fair goers. Jake Brofee came to the fair as a representative of W.C.S.H. and said it was the best fair he had attended, the hall by far exceeded any display

anywhere, he was most enthusiastic about the whole set up. So 1951 fair appeared to be a success.

In 1952 September 16-17-18-19 the racing was especially good and there were some big pay offs in the betting. It was voted to build a new paddock for the racing depart. The Cattle Show was as large as ever and so were the crowds, schools and bands closed for Wednesday which helped to swell the gate. The vaudeville entertained the people as well as the town band. Friday it rained so those events were held on Saturday along with the horse show which had over 100 horses entered. This year Joie Chitwood had the thrill show - which drew a big crowd on Saturday night.

In 1953 the Franklin Journal put out a special Fair edition, featuring a lot of people who had shown at the fair for years and helped to build it into one of the best in Maine. As usual there was a big showing of Cattle and in some instances the premiums had been increased. There were more oxen and steers than in previous years. Again there was a big midway and a good crowd to enjoy it. The Joie Chitwood show again was the closing event.

September 21-22-23-24-1954 was a good fair in spite of the fact that hurricane Edna had passed through about a week before and caused quite a lot of damage, but people found enough produce to make a good showing in the hall, and the crowds were glad to get away to visit with other people. The Franklin Journal ran a Contest to find the oldest patrons of the fair, of the 18 people who entered the three chosen were Nettie Heath, 95 of Farmington, Fred McLeary, 92 of Strong and Mattie Millett, 88 of Farmington. These winners were presented gifts and corsages by Mrs. Jacob Worth of the Journal. It rained on Wednesday so the events were set ahead one day and all went well the rest of the week with the usual programs being held.

Clyde Luce was honored at the Skowhegan Fair for his 60 years of showmanship with cattle.

His first fair was with a pair of hereford steer calves, at Allen's Mills fair, were he won 1st place, which was a small yoke for calves (now owned by Clyde Ross). Later the family went into the Jersey business and showed all over the Maine fair circuit and out of state at the Big "E" (Eastern States Expo) in Springfield, Ma. Clyde died in 1957.

In 1955 another hurricane "Iona", threatened to disrupt the fair but people came on Tuesday to see the cattle show. The 4-H had a big tent with all of their exhibits in it. The midway was rearranged so it had a new look, there were more eating booths. The Milking Shorthorn breed was open to the state which made the show much larger lasting all day. There had been a new ticket office erected also a new lavatory built down near the cattle sheds. All the other buildings had been repaired and cleaned before the fair started. The vaudeville show was different using local talent and this pleased the people. The Old Crow Band was featured one evening with special novelty acts and good music. Again Farmington Fair was a success.

September 18-22, 1956, True Whittier was President, Frank Knowlton, Secretary and John Jones Treasurer. The Weather was good Tuesday and Wednesday, but it rained so hard on Thursday most events were called off. The midway was the biggest in years, as was the cattle show. The Jersey show was opened to the state, which brought in a lot more cattle. The 4-H had a good display. The ox and horse pulling drew big crowds as well as big classes. Buddy Wagner's Death Dodgeing Hell Drivers put on the usual spectacular show. A prize of \$10.00 was offered by the Franklin Journal to the person traveling the greatest distance to attend the fair. People from many states registered but Lieut. Jeanne Sherburne of Hawaii had traveled over 5,000 miles. She was visiting her folks Rev. and Mrs. John G.P. Sherburne of Strong. All Events were completed by Satur-

day and was one of the biggest crowds ever.

September 17-21, 1957, found the buildings had been painted and spruced up. The Ayshire breed was now opened to the state making the cattle show very large. The Exhibition Hall again was filled with farm produce and works of handicrafts. The pulling was especially good with full classes. The racing was up to par and the betting was good. The Old Crow band again entertained one evening, there was vaudeville as usual and one evening a display of fireworks was featured. The horse show again had a full day of activity on Saturday to help close the fair.

The fair of 1958 was a success but the weather was not favorable to bring people for afar but all of the showing, pulling and racing went on as usual, the exhibits were of the same good quality as in the past. The fair closed with good racing and the Sandy River Riding Club horse show.

The September 22-26, 1959 fair was the 119th year and proved to be a great success. In the hall there were 5 grange exhibits with Chesterville winning first prize for the 3rd year in a row. The exhibition hall was full of farm produce and handiwork. The weather cooperated and this brought out the crowds from all over the state. The racing drew many from other areas of the state and proved to be quite pleasing to many as the long shots came in for good pay offs. With a big cattle exhibit and good pulling plus a full midway to be capped off by a big horse show, all made the year successful.

September 20-24, 1960 the fair got off to a bad start with rain on Tuesday, some of the cattle show events went on as scheduled and by evening the skys were clear and the Old Crow Band entertained the crowd that turned out as the weather cleared. There were some big classes in the sheep show all of the cattle stalls were filled, there were 208 head of oxen for the town teams. Wednesday was a record crowd, which seemed to be the pattern for the week. Kenneth French was president of the society. There was still the abuse of family tickets but there seemed to be no way of combating the situation. A new attraction for Friday night drew a big crowd which was the White Star Rodeo, with stunts performed by horses rather than the cars of the past few years. The evening horse pulling also drew large crowds. The milking shorthorn classes were open to the state, the Sandy River Riding Club had one of the best shows of the season. There were several minor accidents so the Red Cross booth under the direction of Florence Jones was kept very busy.

With the opening of the 1961 fair on September 19th - 23rd, the race fans were greeted with a new betting station that had 26 windows facing the track and the front was all hot topped. The paddock had had 40 feet added to the building. Several local men were also racing horses which added to the interest of the patrons. A good showing of oxen and cattle was in evidence. Farm displays were scarcer than in the past years, although the fancy work and other displays upstairs were full. Several local service clubs were in evidence as trying to earn money for their worth while projects, the local churches were operating eating concessions. The hurricane threatened the vicinity so the big auto tent was taken down and all the autos were returned to their respective garages. There was no damage and the rest of the events went on as usual and the fair closed the horse show.

In 1962 - September 18-22, we saw five days of the fair, a new feature was the pony pulling, which proved to be very pleasing to the public. Victor Amusement Carnival had the midway concession, so there were some different games and rides for people to enjoy. The weather was good but breezy and the crowds were better than usual. Governor James Reed visited the fair on Thursday afternoon and viewed the



Only shut down of Farmington Fair came in 1981.



various activities in progress. Farmington Grange won 1st in their division. Friday night attraction was an all Girl Racing Rodeo which was definitely a crowd pleaser. Again a successful year.

September 17-20th 1963, Eben Farmington was the President. The weather was very cooperative so that large crowds came in spite of the fact that the admission was advanced to \$1.00, but gave free admission to the grandstand and paddock. There were so many cars that filled the parking lots and most of the nearby peoples yards. The horse show was a big success, Tom Moore was the Judge and Gail Davis acted as steward. Governor Reed attended these events and the races on Saturday, presenting the Government trophy to the winner of one race.

1964 September 22-26, the first day of the fair was rather cloudy but later the skys cleared and the events went on as scheduled. Dan Webb of Wilton had a long string of steers for showing, open to state, Holsteins had a big display of cattle for the dairy breeds. Chesterville Grange won a blue ribbon for three divisions and the Juvenile. A new attraction that proved to be a big hit was the racing of ostriches, Gene Holten trained them to race in sulkys, like the race horses, and they were very fast, also provided other antics. Mr. Holter is a trainer of wild animals and uses them for parts in movies.

In 1965 September 20-25, the horse racing started on Monday, so there were six days of racing, the admission was free to the fairgrounds on Monday but people going to the grandstand and paddock had to pay. There had been a drought most of the summer but the exhibits in the hall were very tastefully arranged so it wasn't noticeable in the exhibits. The weather was good and Wednesday the temperature was in the 90's. Chesterville again won the Grange exhibit. The attraction for Friday night was Myron Floreu of the Lawrence Welk Show, but soon after he moved onto the grandstand, which was filled, but he finished his act from there, which pleased the people and gave them more of a chance for his autograph.

In 1966 September 19-24, on May 28th Frank Knowlton resigned as Secretary after 39 years and Don Fletcher was elected to take his place as Secretary of the fair. Robert McCleery was the President. Several changes had been made, the trustees had approached Ruby Wright about selling 170 square feet of her land on Maple Avenue that was next to the fairgrounds, so they had that to use. Several areas had been black topped to lay the dust, the automobile tent was the biggest improvement. Fair was now to be six days but free admission on Monday but no admission to the fair exhibition hall building. The usual events for open and dairy cattle took place as scheduled. Smokey's Greater Shows had the midway. Smokey Gilmore is from Strong and has the concession for many fairs and carnivals. Wednesday and Thursday proved to be very rainy so a lot of the events were cancelled. On Friday two of the concession workers were married by the ferris wheel, which was a great crowd pleaser. In the art department there were 142 entries under the direction of Anna Kershnen. Governor Reed and Kenneth Curtis were both guests of the fair. The entertainment for Friday night was Jo Ann Castle, also of the Lawrence Welk show.

On September 6th, 1967 a small fire damaged one stall of the open cattle shed, it was noticed by Mr. Pike who notified the fire department, it was about 4:30 in the afternoon and 20 men responded, the fire was soon extinguished and not too much damage. There were no animals in the sheds and things should be right for fair opening on the 18th.

Fair opened on the 18th with a good crowd. A new section had been built on the horse barn for more room. The

entrance on Maple Avenue had exit road to avoid congestion. Also there had been some work done on the wiring, which was beginning to need attention, due to safety sake. There were large showings in the cattle and sheep department Al Martin of Boston was responsible for the vaudeville between heats at the races, with Saturday night show of Lucky Mustang's Hell Drivers. On Saturday Forster's entertained about 3,000 of their employers and their families with a big tent with the races and midway to entertain the people. The fair was classified a success.

February 9, 1968 one of the horse barns burned. There were eleven race horses, both trotters and pacers that perished from smoke inhalation barn. At 6:25 p.m. Ernest Danforth spotted the fire after he heard an explosion and saw smoke and flames erupt from the stable, he lived in a trailer about 30 feet from the stable, so he rushed over to get the horses out. The fireman from Farmington and West Farmington responded, they used a resuscitator on some of the horses, succeeded on some but one only lived a short time before dropping dead. The horses lost belonged to several local men. Sheridan Smith, Albert Bergeron, Llewelyn Bubier and Don Buckman. On the 19th the people of the fair presented Ralph Hall with a decorated birthday cake in honor of his birthday and to commemorate his 44 years as a trustee of the Society, the last several years he has had charge of all of the pulling events.

The fair started on September 16-21. Monday was a show day, but Tuesday was both for the dairy and beef breeds. There had been stalls made for the horses, to replace the burned barn, and the paddock had been moved to the other side of the race track, nearer the stables. A group from Brazil, S. America, Rio Grande deporte part of partners of the Allianie Development team came to Maine and Maynard Dolloff Maine Comm. of Agriculture brought them to the fair and were shown around the grounds and buildings by Pres. Robert McCleery and Secretary Don Fletcher, they saw. The weather was quite perfect for the fair and everything went along very well.

In 1969, September 15-20 a new covered pulling ring had been built and was used for the first time. All of the dairy shows were now open to the state so there were more cattle than usual, also there was a big tent for showing and bleachers for the interested spectators, there were some new judges for most of the dairy and beef breeds, some were from out of state, so impartial.

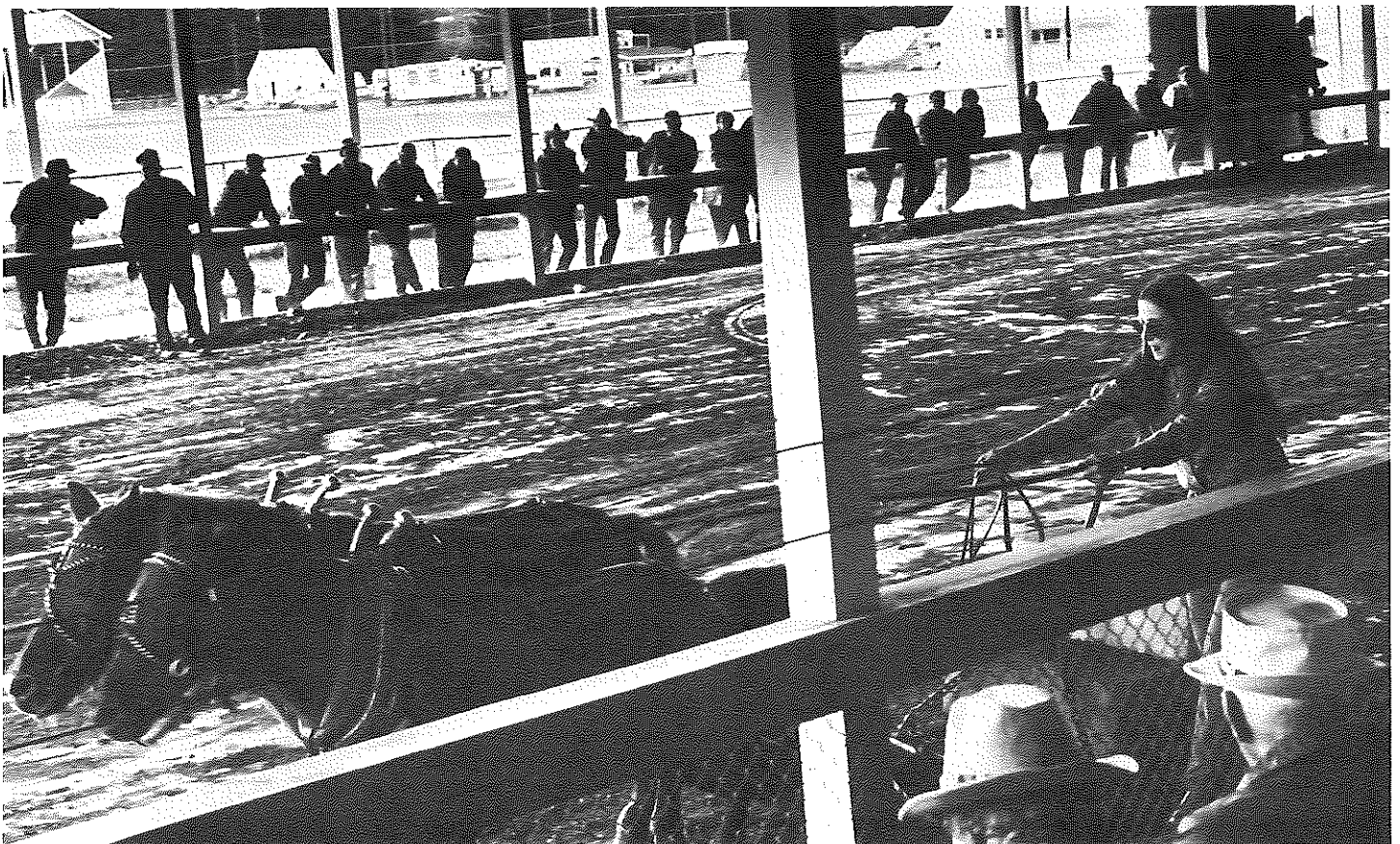
The 4H steer auction was a huge success with Ray Lamers of the Pioneer House was the high bidder. Clare Mosher was President of the Society and Frank Beedy was Superintendent of the hall, which was filled with farm produce and peoples artistic talents. The closing event of the fair was The Lucky Mustang Hell Drivers a crowd pleasing show.

September 21-26, 1970, a new ruling that all the hall exhibits had to be placed by 10:30 p.m. on Sunday night. There were new toilet facilities for the paddock area, also fire hydrants. Monday was not a free gate any longer but three nights of grandstand were free. The Senior Citizens of Farmington and Wilton attended in large groups to view the exhibits and enjoy Smokey's Greater Shows in the midway. Saturday was a big 4H day and the fair closed with the Joie Chitwood Thrill Show.

1971, September 20-25. The race track had been widened so seven sulkys could go abreast. The midway had more rides, which the large crowds enjoyed. The Senior Citizens day now took in the whole Franklin County. Maynard Dolloff was in attendance and declared this was one of the best fairs in the state and the fruit and vegetable displays were the largest and most colorful ever. Herdsinau's award was given for the best care of animals and neatness around the stalls,



Frank Knowlton on rain Fair Day.



Pony Pulling 1981.

Gaylawn Farms (Lawrence Yeaton) won the trophy. Bud-dy Hagnet's Hill Driver's closed the show. One thing that marred the excitement of the fair was the finding of Judy Hands dead body in the sawdust pile at the end of Lincoln Street still unsolved....

1972 September 19-20-21-22-23-24. A new building was added an automobile barn, ten feet high, forty four by three hundred eighty feet, with wooden sides, doors at each end and one in the easterly side, costing \$46,523. So there was a great auto show with other exhibits intermingled. The horse show was held on Sunday before the fair, well attended. Wilson Grange won first place, another big showing in the dairy and beef breeds, Dick Day acting as M.C. for this. There was a big crowd due to good weather. A helicopter was on hand to take people for rides to view the town and fair from the air. The horse pulling was very lively and drew a big crowd with large classes.

1973 September 16-22, The fair book was dedicated to Ralph Hall who had served for so many years, also Clyde Wheeler resigned as grounds man. More pulling was added at night. The 4H was adding events, and a pig scramble drew a lot of spectators and proved to be fun for all. The Society had a chance to buy thirty acres on the easterly side of the grounds for \$30,000, this would make more parking room as the infield cannot be used due to the racing rules.

1974 September 15-21, seven days of fair, the premium book was dedicated to Clyde Wheeler for his forty two years as trustee and work as grounds man. The midway was the largest in history, and good weather made this an outstanding year. Leroy Hammond was the President, a surprise feature was a milking contest using people from the crowd, a very amusing event. There were a lot of 4H events for young and old to enjoy. Dick Cobb was featured in the Hill Drivers, he has been in Hollywood movies and James Bond movies. The racing drew large crowds and the betting showed some good payoffs. Ardine Ellis one of the workers who worked as ticket takers handyman had a bad heart attack, Mattie also worked in the Secretary's office, he died after fair. Voter Hill farms won the Herdsmen trophy.

1975 - September 14-20. The roof of the grandstand had been raised to make a room for the photographic equipment booth for the racing finishes. A new feature was the Powder Puff pulling. The drawing for the Maine State Lottery was held Thursday night. The weather was good but a little on the chilly side. There were over three hundred head of show cattle and one hundred horses in the horse show. Saturday there was a draft horse show with a good number of horses being shown, some from out of state. Dana Hamlin 95, of Temple, was thought to be the oldest ticket holder of the fair. The hall was full of exhibits 13 of them being Granges.

1976 September 19-24th. Opened with the horses show on Sunday and a lot of 4H events on Monday. It was decided to use local talent for the programs, so the Old Crow Band and some high school bands were featured. In the big sheep tent was a mural of the various phases of sheep raising, the processing of wool and the preparing of meat, all done by Theo Walker. A calf scramble was much enjoyed by those participating and those watching. There were twenty-two entries in the Powder Puff pulling with several funny incidents taking place. Clare Mosher had the best farm exhibits with five Junior exhibits. The draft horse show was in the covered ring but even though people could be more comfortable it was more confusing to the show horses. Another good day of weather and great crowds go down in history.

In 1977 September 19-25, Norman Waite of Vienna was the President and as usual there was a good showing of cat-

tle and the hall was filled with exhibits pleasing the people who came to view them. There were eight grange exhibits with Farmington getting the blue ribbon. 4H has a lot of exhibits and activities going for them. Forest Allen was honored with a big cake provided by the Fair officials, for fifty years of service as an electrician on the fair grounds, also helping to keep the exhibitors happy by helping to hook up there exhibits for power, he was most appreciative of the party. At the Maine Fair Association in the winter Farmington was awarded a plaque for having the best exhibition hall in the state.

In 1978 September 17-22. A new feature was added to the displays: that was poultry, these were unusual and rare breeds and shown by one man. Wendall Cook of Avon was the President. Senior Citizens day was Wednesday the weather was good but a little on the cool side, so the crowd kept moving enjoying Smokey's Greatest Shows and the exhibits in the hall. There was a big showing of cattle, two hundred and fifty dairy animals, one hundred horses, two hundred and forty sheep, one hundred chickens, and one hundred 4H animals. For entertainment the Triple Town Swingers put on an exhibition. Mt. Blue band entertained, one evening the U.S. Marine Corp of Brunswick put on a flag ceremony, and a auto thrill show was back with Crash Monreau the leading attraction. Pulling and racing continued to draw big crowds to their areas.

In 1979 September 16-22. There was a new midway Billy Burr, so he had different shows and rides for all to enjoy.

As tropical storm David went through Farmington and surrounded areas on September tenth about four p.m. with lots of rain and high winds, taking down trees, poles, and wires and doing quite a lot of damage but nothing too much at the fairgrounds. There were no injuries. Apparently this cleared the air so when the fair started there was only good weather for the week causing good crowds to attend. There were six farm displays and many other good exhibits in the hall, especially fancy work with fifty afghans, over thirty sofa pillows, fifteen quilts, several comforters along with the incidentals. There were more than two-hundred pictures and paintings on display. At the sheep tent the club put on an exhibition called from Sheep to Shawl, showing the process of shearing the sheep, cleaning and caring for the wool, then spinning it into yarn, then it was knitted into a 54 inch shawl which was sold for money for the club. The entertainment was a rock band also some local celebrities, along with the Triple Town Swingers for the final night Dick Cobb was back with the Auto Dare Devils. The 4H had there usual frolick, and the Beef show was one of the best in the years. The races drew big crowds, and the draft horse show also drew a large crowd, it was back in the horse show ring where there was more room. Another successful year went in history.

In 1980, September 14-20. There was a big field of race horses as the winners were awarded cooler trophies, also the Horsemen's Association made beautiful blankets to present to the winners. Monday was Kingfield day with the merchants donating coolers in memory of Harold S. Stranton a staunch supporter of the racing profession. The weather was rainy that day so the racing was postponed but all the other events went on as scheduled Clare Mosher had a farm exhibit for the 70th consecutive year. There was a good display of fancy work but not as large as last year. Wednesday was not too good a day but most of the events went as scheduled as the crowd didn't seem to bother with the weather. In the 4H sheep sale Arthur Compson of the I.G.A. store bought the winner, weighing 125 pounds for \$4.05 a pound, he also bought several others but at a lesser figure. The pulling was very good and drew large crowds as did the dairy and beef shows. The horse shows were a success.

On Saturday Forster Manufacturing again entertained about 3,000 of its employees. The fair closed with singing by Jeanie C. Riley and fireworks.

In 1981 September 20-26. The horse show opened the fair with a good crowd, there were some 4H events too that pleased the crowd, and the day closed with a display of fireworks. In the hall there were nine farm displays and plenty of other fruit and vegetables plus the Grange exhibits on the first floor while the art, fanciwork, flowers and other things to fill the upstairs space. The auto building is not used for autos anymore but a lot of different exhibits that are just as interesting. A new sport was introduced the 4 wheel drive pulling and drew a large crowd. The pig scramble was a big success and caused a lot of fun, the Mothers were given larger pigs to try to catch and with greasy hands it was quite hilarious. The beef 4H steer was purchased by Arthur Compton on the I.G.A. store and Joan Brinkman won the 4H foundation steer for which more than \$1,000.00 had been raised.

There had been a small fire in one of the cattle barns back in June, but there was no damage and the cattle barns were full of show animals. Racing still brought the usual crowds to fill the grandstand area.

In 1982 fair opened September 19th with a big poultry show with all kinds of fowl but water birds with classes for all. Opening day was one of the biggest ever, an estimated 15,000 people flooded the grounds over 5,000 single tickets were sold but most people had their own membership tickets. The hall held the usual good exhibits, a special attraction was a cross between a squash and a pumpkin called a squmkin and weighed 376 pounds, it belonged to Wayne Walker. There was an increase in the oxen and steer classes as well as sheep, but the dairy breeds had fewer cattle. It rained on Tuesday but cleared later and the program went on as planned. An interesting event was drafting about 8 women from the audience and bringing in some cows to stage a milking contest, this proved to be fun for all, as some of the animals did not cooperate to well. There were 219 dairy cattle when counted 153 beef, 247 sheep, this did not include the 4H animals there. Forster Manufacturing entertained their employees on Saturday to swell the crowd. Again the fair felt the sting of tragedy a house on the Strong Road caught fire in the early forenoon, some escaped but a two year old girl went and hid in a closet so that she died, even though every effort was made to find her.

1983, September 18-24. Parimutual opened two days early for a longer racing schedule. The four wheel drive again drew a big crowd. The poultry was bigger than before with 19 different people entering their fowls. A new idea was put forth by the Elks Lodge children were given tags that said "Lost Kid" with the child's name, so if he was lost it could be announced easier. In the hall Langdon Adams had taken over as the superintendent to replace Frank Beedy, but the format of the hall remained the same with very good exhibits. The entertainment was varied with the Triple Town Swingers. Joe Perham, Younger Brother's Band and Wendy Holcombe filling in at different times to please the crowds. Arthur Compton again helped out at the auctions for 4H member by buying several of the fat lambs. The 4H frolic again proved to be a crowd pleaser. Horse shows still had their place in entertainment with the draft horse show on Saturday.

In 1984 September 14-22. Billy Burr had the Midway. Senior Citizens day was Tuesday as on Wednesday it was children's day and 6 bicycles were given away. Sunday was probably one of the biggest days as there was almost no place to park a car, every place seemed to be filled, the Exhibition Hall never looked better and was full of pretty things. In the pulling ring there was a lot of excitement at



times, when only inches decided the pull for placements. On Saturday the parimutual betting was \$87,000 so the racing had a good week. The weather for the most part was good but a little on the cool side. The Senior Citizens Band, the Granddads and High School bands entertained, on Saturday night Tom Cash, Johnny Cash's brother entertained, he flew in from Nashville for the evening where the temperature was 72 degrees. The usual activities in the cattle and sheep departments took place, and the 4H activities went on all though the fair.

In 1985 September 15-21. There was another big poultry show, and the Sandy River Horse show with 4H activities opened the fair. A new event was the mini tractor pull and

even lawn mowers, with the four wheelers, horses, oxen, and ponies one could see a lot of pulling! As usual the hall was full. Wilson Grange won the blue ribbon. The weather was good so the crowds came, there were over two-hundred cattle for showing. In the sheep show the Averill family gave a special prize to the Supreme Champion Ram, in memory of their father Merrit Averill who had been affiliated with the fair for sixty years, the last few years as having charge of the sheep show and acting as announcer for the draft horses. An added attraction was some of the business men being drafted to have a milking contest, using goats, this proved to be a crowd pleaser, as did parts of the 4H frolic. Local talent entertained some during the fair with Ava Barber and Billy Joe Spears appearing on Friday night. Another big fair week.

In 1986 September 12-20. Billy Burr still had the big midway, the Riding Club held their horse show on Sunday, also the big poultry show and some 4H activities. A new feature was tired. It was log yarding, there were six pair of horses and fourteen pairs of oxen that participated in this event. The American Legion had a new building for their beano games, and several of the old buildings have disappeared from the grounds. The Exhibit Hall was full of the usual exhibits with Farmington Grange taking the blue ribbon. Upstairs Daisy Hall was honored for serving as Hall Matron for the past 14 years. There was good weather, although windy at times for the fair. All types of pulling was carried on at some time. For one oxen class a trophy, given by Goldie Goldsmith as a memorial, was presented to the winner, who has to win it for three consecutive years to be his, if not it is passed to the next winner. In the horse show blankets were given to the winners while halters and lead lines went to the runner up. Again some of the local talent provided entertainment, along with the 4H frolic, Schooner Fare also pleased the listeners with their music, for closing Dick Curlis and John Lincoln Wright pleased the crowd.

In 1987. The judges stand in front of the grandstand which was built before 1915, was needing much repair, so the horseman's association moved it over near the paddock and are repairing it, to keep for history's sake. There is only one other like in in the state.

The fair comes up September 20-26 this year.

Continued By Donald Fletcher

1987 - The usual sprucing of the premises goes on. Unfortunately there is not enough use of the grounds thru the summer to generate income for the Society besides the fair itself. Fair seems to get larger every year. We now have a track for truck pull type events 30' x 300' in the infield in front of the grandstand where the track Judge's stand used to be. This, along with the portable stage gives us much more flexibility of the grandstand use.

Fair went well. Entertainment was provided by Shelly West, Razy Bailey, Rodney Richards with his chainsaw log carving and High School Bands from Livermore Falls and Mt. Blue.

Harrison Starbird decided to give up the direct responsibility of Grounds Superintendent and Roger Ladd was elected as his replacement; Harrison to assist Roger with the details for a couple more years.

1988 - Bill Burr's Fun-o-Rama midway is playing in New Hampshire during our fair dates so a new midway is on the agenda. After lots of proposals and investigation, it was decided to have Gillette Shows from Mass. Trustee Bob McCleary has been named Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The project of filling in the gully behind the road into the pulling ring and racetrack has begun. This will eliminate a dangerous condition and greatly improve park-

ing arrangements. In addition the society is obligated to accommodate R.V.'s during fair for guests and exhibitors. It is also necessary to furnish water, electricity and sewerage disposal as set forth in rules of the Department of Human Services, State of Maine.

The Fairground looks very nice for fair this year. Much maintenance work has been done thru the summer. The Association had an excellent fair this year with lots of entries and exhibits in the Exhibition Hall and the car barn is full of exhibitors of a great variety of merchandise. Sorry to say, S.A.D. 9 abolished the tradition of Fair Day for district schools. Entertainment, in addition to the usual Franklin Frolic with pig scramble and other events consisted of Melinda Liberty and Schooner Fair, all well received. For the first time the Poultry Show exhibitors were required to leave their birds on display from their show on Sunday until Wednesday at 4:00 p.m. There was much interest in the usual breeds.

1989 - At long last, this year's big project is a building bee for a cattle show ring. This will be roofed and side posted with a section filled in to house grandstand and cattle office area. The Society will pay for the materials with labor furnished free by fair personnel and friends (i.e. area Beef and Dairy farmers). The building was completed before fair and was dedicated to "The Worthley Family" of Strong. Nice to see such cooperation on this endeavor.

In addition, the portable stage was enhanced with back wall, sides and roof. The acoustics, with this change, materially improved.

Fair dates this year are Sept. 17 to 23. A couple of new events were included. The Hall featured Amateur Photography entries with premiums paid the winners and Trustee Dick Hall conducted a Llama Show in the pulling ring. There was much interest. Although the weather was not good, the grounds generally had good attendance for the cattle judging and pulling events. Grandstand entertainment featured Blue Grass Band and Shotgun Red.

This year saw the completion of the filling of the gully and enlargement of the parking area and camping area.

1990 - The Society's 150th year celebration. For the first time, a large event was planned for the summer to be well in advance of Fair. The Farmington Rotary Club hired the grounds for a Rodeo. This was a tremendous success for them and it is hoped that this will generate more interest in the use of the grounds for other projects. The Society certainly needs additional revenue as fixed costs continue to mount.

The fair this year was held September 16 to 22 and appeared to be successful. This year featured much entertainment, our 150th celebration with Buffalo & Brandy, Ed Morris Balloon Zoo, Stella Parton, The Boyz and finished the week with a Demolition Derby. From the noise generated, it had to be successful although the weather was not too good - cold and rain - during the week. While we do lose friends and workers of the Society all the time, we were particularly saddened by the untimely demise of Mildred Ross and Harrison Starbird this year. Mildred worked untold hours on this history book which contains her work through 1986. Most of the rules and procedures she reflects are still in use today. She was a diligent, faithful worker for 40 years in the Secretary's office and will always be fondly remembered.

Harrison Starbird was President of the Society about 1968-70 and then succeeded Clyde Wheeler as Trustee and Superintendent of Grounds, which duty he continued until 1987. He still assisted Roger Ladd with the planning and duties until the day before his death. He has been missed and remembered by all connected with our fair and the other fairs of the state of Maine.

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