

# Stan and Mary Matthews, a lifetime of fair service

Mary and Stan Matthews have been working with the Acton Fall Fair as a team for 41 years, since 1939.

Mary has been involved with the fair much longer. When she was Mary Clarridge living with her parents on what is now the Clarence Cole farm on Highway 7 east of Acton, she drove and showed horses for her competitive father. In fact, he was president of the Esquesing Fair before a separate Acton and Georgetown fair were even born.

Stan was raised in Guelph in the Matthews home- stead on Highway 7—the lovely stone house and 250 acres that is now part of the Ontario Rehabilitation Centre.

The Matthews are still on Highway 7, a little further east of Acton than the Coles farm where they have raised ponies and Jerseys for most of their married lives.

A large framed plaque on the Matthews dining room wall attests their fair faith. It's an agricultural service diploma dated November 1975 from the Acton Agricultural Society bearing both Stan and Mary's names. Stan is also a life member.

Most of Mrs. Matthews' years at the fair have been spent in the exhibit hall arranging entries and assisting the judge.

"I've been in homecrafts for years and years and years," she chuckles.

She always kept Saturday free to drive the Matthew fine harness, Hackney and Shetland ponies in the pony show with her husband.

The Matthews are renowned all over the country for their ponies—bringing home walls full of ribbons every year from fall fairs, the CNE and the Royal.

Championships were often the order of the day including the coveted grand championship award at the CNE. One of the Matthews' stallions was said to be the finest stud in the country.

Fair day was always busy with Stan packing up the six ponies he would take to the fair. He always took a team from his three breeds complete with each pony's own set of harness, driving rigs, outfits, extra harness and extra lines (reins).

"There was never a dull moment" Mary comments.

The pair were always so well equipped they had harness to spare and Stan tells of the time a fellow

competitor was unable to enter because her pony chewed through her tandem lines. Stan lent her his extra set and "She beat me", he growls.

In the old days, the days before Ladies Board when Mrs. Matthews, Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Bert Davidson set up the exhibit hall alone on a Thursday, there was no Sunday fair. Mary is still very much against Sunday showing. She says the ladies board voted "100 percent against it, but we got it anyway". She's also against the beer tent, thinks it takes up too much room.

Other changes the Matthews mourn are the lack of entries in the "fancy turnout" class. For the first time this year there will be no fancy turnouts.

In other years Stan remembers as many as 12 smart ponies drawing a polished buggy driven by a pair of youngsters dressed like old fashioned brides and grooms.

The Matthews showed two fancy turnouts often driven by their grandson Larry and Sandra van Fleet wearing a pink gown with 30 yards of fabric in the skirt.

Stan tells of the time, at another fair (is there another fair?) when the lively pony drawing the rig got the bit between his teeth and gave the eight year old Larry quite a ride. The pony never broke from a trot but he nearly pulled poor Larry's arms out of the sockets. He won the class anyway.

The Matthews have retired from pony breeding now and the Jersey cattle they used to farm are now farmed by their son Don near Fergus.

However, every year at the fair you'll see Mary Matthews bouncing around the exhibit hall wearing herself out and you'll find Stan sitting at a wee table beside the pony ring proudly wearing his "life member" ribbon and organizing the show that has been his life's blood.



## Beautiful babes belong at fair

An estimated 100 babies will be gurgling, gooing, and howling at the Fall Fair baby show held Saturday afternoon.

There's been a baby show at the Fall Fair since the early 30's with an interruption of a few years in the 50's. Since the early 60's the baby show has been revived and now attracts an arena full of spectators

and baby relatives.

Each baby is judged on overall health and all receive a token prize. Mothers of non-winners are always good sports, organizers say. Twins and triplets are expected this year.

Each winner will receive a 1980 silver dollar as well as ribbons and prizes donated by Acton

merchants. Best of show received one of two large trophies (one for girls, one for boys) donated by the Fall Fair Ladies Board.

Babies are entered from as far away as London, Kitchener, Erin, Milton, and Georgetown for this one of the few fall fair baby shows in existence.



Stan and Mary Matthews

## Friday night fun

Friday night is big entertainment night at the fair. In addition to the Miss Acton Fair contest a full variety show will be offered.

Five acts will grace the arena stage this year all being accompanied by the Ralph Fraser Trio. Included in the program are the Beauty Spots, a dancing duo; Captain Bill James, magic, mirth with audience participation; the Paul Brothers and Shirley, singing comedy trio; the Amazing Arlise, unicycling and juggling; Doreen, singer.

Judges for the approximately 15 entrants in the Miss Acton Fall Fair contest will be Judy Welch of the Judy Welch modelling agency, Gunther Oldenberg, film producer and Production co-owner and Dave Johnson, disc jockey from CFGM Country radio.

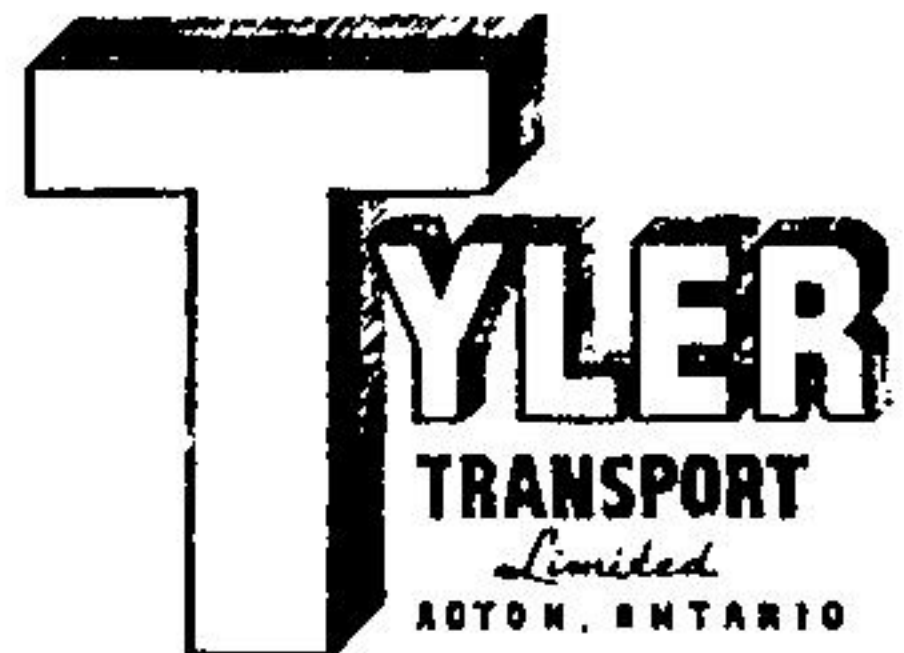
These two events couple with the early evening horse draw draws one of the largest crowds in the fair.

The Friday night show is one of the few fair events guaranteed to be a success regardless of the weather—the show is indoors.



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