

From our files

Oakville's annual autumn fair was popular event for almost 70 years

For nearly seventy years the fall fair was an annual event in Oakville. At first it was held in the Old Temperance Hall by the Oakville Agricultural Association, formed in 1852 with George K. Chisholm as president and Robert Balmer as secretary.

Exhibits included "agricultural produce, farm implements, livestock, domestic manufacturers and fine arts."

According to a newspaper account, the fair held late in October 1855 was a great success, with a hall crowded with exhibits. "The fine arts department was well represented," ran the account. "Mr. Urquhart and Chisholm and Moore, Druggists, displayed some very nice perfumery."

Some time in the sixties the Oakville Agricultural Society was succeeded by the Trafalgar Agricultural Society that held fairs alternately at Oakville and Milton.

At first, fairs were held in Oakville near the market building on Navy Street, with cattle and horses being kept in pens on the present site of St. Jude's Church, and tethered along William Street.

The poster advertising the 1868 fair announced that there was over \$600 to be paid out in prizes, ranging from four dollars for horses and cattle down to 25 cents for shell work, wax, feather and hair flowers and small fruits.

In 1880 the fair was transferred to a site on Reynolds Street that is now Wallace Park. It had formerly been a cemetery.

For many years a feature of the fair was a procession of public school pupils of the town and township. They would form up at the town hall and march to the agricultural hall on the fair grounds, where prizes were given the winners of competitions in singing, map-drawing, writing, sewing and horseback riding.

Sometimes the attendance at the two-day fair was so great that the chief constable needed thirteen deputies to help him police it.

In 1913 the Reynolds Street property was abandoned for a new site on the north side of Rebecca Street now occupied by the Oakville Arena, the Figure Skating Club and

Trafalgar Park. The character of the fair changed with the years, and it became more of a horse show and social event. In 1926 it was discontinued.

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