

Wartime

# At 1940 Fair

Canada's Greatest County Exhibition.

This has long been the proud boast of Markham Fair, and appeared on the cover of the 1,000 or more copies of the prize list printed by the Economist and Sun in 1940. The Directors had decided to hold the fair as usual that war year, only cancelling the harness races as an economy measure. The dates were Oct. 3-5, a three day fair, but its financial success for any year, despite grants, donations, advertisements in the prize list and fees for concessions, hinged largely on the "gate" on Saturday, which in turn depended largely on the weather. Admission charge was 35 cents, autos, 35 cents, children free.

The official opening was always on Friday afternoon, and in 1940 the paper reported; "The Fair Board is to be congratulated on securing Mr. Rex Frost, well known radio commentator, for the opening ceremonies. Mr. Frost will give his regular broadcast of farm news, in addition to introducing the 85th anniversary of Markham Fair."

**Horseshoeing Not A Lost Art** — The Directors of the Fair faithfully sought for some new attractions — each year. The Economist commented in 1940: "One of the new attractions that will surely be of interest is the horseshoeing contest Saturday afternoon. Spectators will be reminded of the poem, "Under the spreading chestnut tree the village smithy stands", as the hammers resound and the sparks fly. Some

people might think that a tire-changing contest would be more likely to draw a large number of contestants, but we are assured that many can still shoe a horse." There was a busy blacksmith shop on Church St. at that time.

Some of the highlights of the program in 1940 were the Black and White Show (Holsteins) on Friday, Junior Farmers' competitions, pony races, boys' colt races; on Saturday, a horse show by the Hunt Club, parade of prize winning stock before the wooden grandstand (originally privately owned), the midway, pretty meagre in those days, a merry-go-round of course, a sideshow or two, refreshment stands, games of "skill" and chance — although these were forbidden by the fair's constitution, and probably still are.

Most people went home before darkness set in, exhibits were hastily removed from the agricultural building — the rink — which was then readied for the "Monster" dance, invariably well attended and financially successful. Square dancing was very popular — and still is whenever there is the opportunity for it.

Another fair time attraction was the play, "Crazy House", staged at the Town Hall by the Young People of the United Church, under the auspices of Markham W.I., Friday and Saturday nights. The proceeds were for Markham Library — it didn't receive any money from the taxpayers.

On October 3, the

opening day of the 1940 fair, the Economist and Sun reported; "A forerunner to Markham Fair was witnessed on Saturday evening last when a free race was staged down Main Street by Burkholder's Dairy horse and wagon. The race started in Mount Joy and continued to the Tremont Hotel where the horse stopped. The only other entrant in the race was Reeve Heisey in his V8, accompanied by the milkman, Geo. Sellers. They arrived down town just as the Percheron had won the race. George promptly took the reins and brought the winner up street again, and after careful examination, it was found not even one bottle was smashed."

A day to meet old friends — Saturday afternoon was the time to meet old friends at the fair — it could be counted on. The paper reported that Mr. R. J. Mann of Prince Albert, Ont., present on Saturday, had not missed a single fair in 66 years. Born at Brown's Corners, he said he had attended without a miss since he was 8 years old.

40 Years earlier — In the year 1900, the Economist reported that the fair was "in full swing", and that "the display in the two halls is the largest and best in the history of the fair. The entries comprise houses, 385; cattle, 200; sheep, 150; poultry, 550; butter, 150; honey and pastry, 220; roots, 100; apples, 450; vegetables, 175; flowers, 150; ladies' work, 500; fine arts, 125; grand total of entries nearly 4,000."

Faker on the Midway (Report in the issue of Oct. 17)



The year was 1967 and Canada's centennial was in full swing. Suitably dressed for the occasion at Markham Fair was Gerri Cosburn, now Mrs. Dennis Seeley of Unionville.



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