

John R. and W. A. Taylor showed their matched team of roadsters on a fancy buggy at all the fairs. John R. owned a race horse as did Wm. Fitzpatrick, and they used to race both in cutters and rigs from the station to the north end, as well as at fairs. Jim McCartney was a great shower of Hackneys. Other great horsemen were Adam and Henry Harkness and Jack Jones. For years Tuesday horse show matinees were held, afternoon and evening, with Adam Harkness horse "Golden Rings" as the star.

Amont other memories of the "Cline Fairs" are the rides of 50 years ago which included a merry-go-round. During the First War domestic exhibits were few, due to shortage of sugar, flour and lard, but in 1919 Mrs. Hec. Stewart recalls winning a linen tablecloth as prize for 5 lbs. of butter bought later by Dr. Hugh Stevenson. She also won a prize on an ecru runner. Then there was the gaily decorated booth sponsored by the Presbyterian Church, where refreshments could be purchased.

Prior to 1920 the Cline family felt that the grounds were somewhat of a nuisance as no use could be made of the field due to the track, so the fair was moved just south of the railroad on the east side to the land of W. A. Barons (now Wm. Falls). It was held here for two or three years. The implement shed served as Crystal Palace and Mrs. John Ferguson and a helper looked after all the lady's exhibits. Mrs. Gordon Widner was an early judge, also Mrs. Earl Haney. Mrs. John Barons won a prize for the biggest and best pumpkin pie, made in the broiler of her new gas stove. Features of this fair were the Calf Classes for children, sponsored by the Department of Agriculture and towards which Eaton donated silverware. Girls ball games were played and at the end of one fair, the tent blew down and a midway man was caught stealing a fruit cake.

By 1921 the fair was back at Cline's. Having suffered from the War, a reorganization was considered due. Every township was given the privilege of receiving a Government grant if applied for - Yarmouth was invited to become part of the new organization and through the help of Mac McVicar and J. W. Freeborn, local members, the grants were obtained and the society became officially known as the Yarmouth and Belmont Agricultural Society. This appeared to be the first official recognition of Yarmouth in connection with the Belmont Fair, although there are many who believe that the remnants of the old Yarmouth Society had been drifting across for years and in fact think they recall prize tickets labelled "Yarmouth Agricultural Society". This we cannot verify. And so in 1921 the fair became an agriculture show again, due to the efforts of Mac, Erle and Bert Taylor. It is said 365 membership tickets were sold and Elgin and the townships contributed generously.

Here is the annual report for 1921 as contained in the Agricultural Societies Report for Ontario: Secretary, Erle Taylor; Legislative grants \$286; Municipal grants \$283; cash donations \$70. Members' fees paid in 1921-211. Gate receipts \$211. Total actual receipts \$1,190. Total prize money paid in cash \$393. Paid in Special Attractions \$54. Officers' salaries \$62. Total expenditures for agricultural purposes \$414. Total actual expenditures \$1,121 -- and the first year grant on membership was paid.

The fair remained at Cline's until about 1930 with the usual features pertaining to an agricultural fair. One year Mitchell Hepburn opened the fair and later had tea with the Weldhens.

In 1931 the fair returned to South Dorchester to the farm of the late Adam Harkness, formerly owned by Lewis Simpson, on whose property the first fairs were held. The new site was across the concession from the old. When the Harkness estate was settled, the land occupied by the fair had been divided so that the Board rented the north section from Henry Harkness until about 1944 when the south half was purchased from John Harkness and for the first time in its entire life Belmont Fair had a permanent home. The fairs in this period were "tent fairs"--the animals arrayed in the shelter of the Harkness buildings and the exhibits and other features in tents. There was a good track and races and exciting midways, children's parades, calf and foal clubs, often a band, and always a "church tent" where fine meals could be had, served first by the Presbyterians, then also by the United and now they take year about. There were also good sports events and special features such as Prizes for the largest family, a Milk Maid contest, open to the world, and a prize for the oldest person. Perennial fair goers were Peter McMillan ~~were Peter McMillan~~ and in 1937 Culver Finch at 80 and Archie A. Taylor at 88 hadn't missed a fair in over 50 years.

There were always good crowds. Those indeed were good fairs.

In 1941 Belmont was all set for its annual fair but before noon along came a severe windstorm which blew everything away, including the crowd. Only one tent withstood the gale. With the grounds a mass of rubble, the fair was called off and held a week later.

In 1948 the Fair Board transferred the deed of their property to the municipality of South Dorchester, reserving the use of the grounds and buildings for an Agricultural Society Fair. In 1948-49 a Community Centre or Arena was constructed and ever since practically all the events have been held inside. This has detracted from the old time fair day tradition of tents but has proved invaluable in inclement weather. In 1949-50-51 the fair was known again as a one-day fair as the first day was solely for preparation.

No sketch would be complete without a brief account of the Boys and Girls Calf Clubs formed in 1937 under the leadership of Roy McGregor, who has continued in this capacity for 20 years. He received, in 1951, a diploma for leadership from the Canadian Council on Boys and Girls Club Work, and in 1953 an Agricultural Service Diploma. In 1950 Don Jenkins became assistant leader. The club now numbers nearly 30. The members are consistent winners and this year at the Aylmer Inter-Club Show won three first prizes in group competition. In 1954 the club became known as the 4-H Dairy Calf Club. For several years the Elgin County Holstein Club's Past Presidents Award of a leather show halter for the first-year member with the highest aggregate score in Elgin came to this club, to Peter Moore, Bill Taylor and Carolyn Davis.

A foal club was formed in 1940 but was of short duration.

In 1954-55 successful Forage Clubs were conducted by Cameron Clark and Walker Weaver.

So important has the work of the Juniors become that their Achievement Day is now the highlight of the fair.

Since the advent of the Arena the excellent displays of the Ladies and Juniors have been shown to advantage in the Auditorium. This is another outstanding department and outstrips many larger fairs in its excellence. In 1950 the Women's Division was formed, with Mrs. Roy McGregor as Superintendent and Mrs. E. E. George as Secretary.

The Children's Department, sponsored for many years by the men, was in 1950 placed under the guidance of the Women's Division and in 1953 became the Junior Fair. It consists of the School Exhibits, School Parade and Pet Show.

The exhibits of livestock have decreased in the past years. The withdrawal of classes for horses has left a void and the horse races are missed. However these are changing times.

As we look back we are filled with an increased admiration and a keener appreciation for the services rendered by the faithful in the past.

We trust that the setting presently provided by our beautiful Gateway at the entrance to our Community Park and the incentive provided by our Centennial may continue to lend impetus to the Yarmouth and Belmont Agricultural Society that it may continue to serve far into the second century;

Softball Team



2nd row Fred Monck and Oswald Baker Managers
Leala Harkness, Beatrice Cousins, Clara Ewin.
Front row Helen Ferguson, Beatrice Harkness, May Demeray.

S P O R T S

Softball Team.



Fred Monck (manager)
Fannie Wintermute, Leola Harkness, Jennie Betterley
Clara Ewin, Helen Ferguson, Bessie Beattie, Beatrice Cousins,
Alice Jones, Lottie Copeman, Beatrice Harkness,

Hardball Team



(Back row)

Clara Weldken, Viola Dames, Lily Harkness, Elsie Boden,
Pearl Betterley

Front row.

Shirley Luton, Myrtle Barons, Mildred Barons, Lily Betterley,
Nellie Kirk.