

1887 The Society purchased another two and one-seventh acres of land from James Patterson on the north.

1888 In 1888 the grounds were levelled and a small race track was built. This same Spring a Stallion show was held, and they continued to hold them annually for several years. These shows were well attended, a large number of fine Stallions being shown.

1889 At the Annual meeting in 1889, six different men were nominated for President, and after considerable balloting Squire Duncan McArthur was elected. Prize money paid in this year amounted to \$403.69.

1890 In 1890, the Society offered a grant of \$50.00 to the Township Council towards the erection of a building on the Township property to be used as a "Lock-up" providing they could have the use of the same as an Office. This building was erected by Mr. Albert Evans, and has been used as an Office by the Society ever since. In this building (a small brick building) in the south-west corner of the Fair Grounds tickets have been sold ever since.

About 1890, a very large Stallion being shown, named Samson, and owned by Ben Johnston, became unmanageable and broke away from his caretaker, George McClellan. This caused great excitement, he rearing on his hind legs and fighting his way through the people and horses with his front feet. People scrambled in every direction until Mr. Johnston, his owner, rushed in and caught him and lead him away to his stable.

In this year the Society purchased another two acres on the north from Isaac Hoover.

1891 In 1891 the Spring show was enlarged and made a Stallion and Grain Show. This year the new grounds were stumped and levelled and a new one-quarter mile track was built under the supervision of Mr. T.C. Campbell and Mr. H.B. Dixon.

1893 In 1893 a roadway was purchased from James Patterson and John Purcell, leading off of Ridout Street into the rear of the Fair Grounds, to be used as a stock entrance.

1896 In 1896 they held their first two-day Fair. Previous to this it was just one day. It was in this year that the writer received his first appointment by the Directors on the committee to oversee the Fancy Work.

1898 In 1898 the Fair was held on October 10th and 11th. The days being very wet the Society was only able to pay 50% of the prize money and borrowed \$150.00 in order to pay that much. The books showed a deficit of \$380.00 at the close of the year's business.

1901 In 1901 another one and one-half acres was purchased from Mrs. Dundas, the full length on the east side of the Fair Grounds, and the Ridout Street entrance was sold, as it had not proved very satisfactory.

1906 In 1906 the Fair was postponed on account of rain and was held on October 11th and 12th. During this time the weather turned very cold and all plants and flowers were frozen in the Crystal Palace.

1908 In 1908 the old Township Hall, the Lock-up, and two acres of land were purchased from Aldborough Township at a price of \$800.00. While the Society had been in possession of this property since 1873 and used it, until this time they had never owned it.

1911 In 1911 more land was purchased from Mrs. Dundas, this being five rods wide, off her orchard, on the east side of the Fair Grounds. Payment was \$200.00 for the land and \$5.00 for each Apple Tree on this strip.

1912 The Grand Stand was built in 1912, at a cost of \$700.00. The Contractors, Lusty Lumber Co., The Women's Institute assisted to the amount of \$500.00.

The President E.G. Lusty, James A. McLean, and Peter McVicar were appointed to act as a building committee along with Angus McGugan representing the Women's Institute, and given power to purchase extra land if necessary.

The Women's Institute were to have 75% of the proceeds of the Fair-night Concert which was held in the Crystal Palace. This was to be applied on their share of the stand costs.

1915 In 1915 the old Township Hall was moved over beside the Crystal Palace to make it more convenient as both buildings were being used for show purposes.

These buildings were rented, most of the year, to the Rodney Basket Co. for storing baskets. When in July both buildings were burned down, they were filled with baskets.

Plans were made immediately for a new building, a committee appointed, tenders asked for. By August 11th 1915, the contract was let to E.G. Lusty for a frame building 50x120 at a cost of \$2,590.00, above a foundation. The contract carried a proviso for the building to be completed by October 11th. Before the building was started the size was changed to 50x144 ft. at a cost of \$3,000.00, to be completed by October 1st. Mr. Adolphus Wehlann supervised the building of the foundation. This building was completed on time and is the same building in use to-day.

1921 In 1921 the grounds were surveyed for a half-mile track but were found too small, so a one-third mile track was surveyed and built under the supervision of J. Frank McGregor.

1922 By 1922 the Hall had been wired and the West Lorne Poultry Show was held in it for a few years.

1923 In 1923 a sheep and hog barn was built, size 26x120 ft. at a cost of \$1,495.00. Gus Wehlann was the contractor. In this year arrangements were made for the School Fair to co-operate with the Annual Fair, which has proved a great success.

1926 In 1926 with the help of the Rodney Old Boys Association, which had been newly formed, a beautiful floor was laid in the Agricultural Hall and dances have been held at Fair time, which have been very profitable to the Society.



- FALL FAIR -
RODNEY ONT.

Midway of old Crystal Palace 1912.

1936-7 In 1936 and 1937 a three day Fair was held with very great success, but the Directors decided they could not spare so much of their time, so reverted back to the usual two-day Fair.

1946 After the fire in 1915, and the New Hall was completed there was a mortgage on the property of \$2,050.00. It has taken all these years since to pay it off. I am very pleased to say the Society is free from debt, at the beginning of the year of 1946.

In 1946 seven acres of land was purchased from Mr. George Borus for \$2,224.20. Some lots on the west side from Verne Franks for \$175.00 and some lots from Alfred J. Branton, with a roadway from Ridout Street for \$500.00, a small piece from Mrs. R. Walker on the north for \$100.00, and a lot No.24 from myself at no cost to the Society.

An engineer was engaged to give levels and layout for a one-half mile track, and to make plans for a children's playground on lot 24. For a great many years there was ice-skating in the large Fair building.

1947 The land was graded and leveled and a new one-half mile track was completed. The Sheep and Hog Barn was moved to the extreme west of the grounds and refitted.

A new Grandstand was built with a seating capacity for approximately 900 people, at a cost of \$3,600.00, of which Mr. B.B. Graham donated \$2000.00.

Fencing was placed outside and inside the race track and around the Fair Grounds property.

1948 In the Spring of 1948 a new Horse Barn was built which cost \$4,500.00 for which the Driving Club donated \$2,000.00.

New electric light and power systems were installed, water systems put in the Horse and Sheep Barns. A new cement platform was put in front of the Grandstand, other necessary buildings added and some buildings painted.

With all these new properties the Society will now have adequate judging and parking space, and a Ball Park and Playground for the community inside the one-half mile race track. This race track is considered to be a first class track, second to none in Western Ontario.

It has been the pleasure of the writer to oversee the levelling of the twenty-two acres of grounds, building the one-half mile race track, the erecting of all buildings and fencings, and act as Grounds Superintendent since 1915, and I have received for the same the usual salary of \$5.00 per annum.

The Society fully expected a grant from the Government toward the cost of the improvement of the grounds, but we found that our Society was not eligible for such grants, so after much discussion, the Agricultural Society deeded their Fair Grounds to the Village of Rodney in order that such a grant may be available for general upkeep. In return the Village of Rodney agreed to allow the Society free use of all grounds, buildings, and all facilities available for all time for Agricultural purposes.

Signed: Ernest G. Lusty

ALDBOROUGH OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION

In August 1898 about 75 people from Rodney and Aldborough held a picnic at the William Schrubbs Fishery on the shore of Lake Erie, at Moore's Dock on Lot 1 of Aldborough. \$3.35 was collected and distributed as prize money. There was dancing in the fish-house, where Mr. Schrubbs played a fiddle, and games, bathing and fishing.

This picnic was so much enjoyed that a decision was made to make it an annual affair. It was moved by Mr. Charles Martini, and seconded by James Welch, that this annual event be called "The Aldborough Old Boys Reunion". Officers were elected to arrange the 1899 picnic:

President - Mr. Patrick Doyle, farmer on 3rd Concession.
1st Vice Pres. - Mr. Charles Martini, hardware merchant.
2nd Vice Pres. - Mr. James E. Welch, brickmaker.

Committee;

W.G. Avey, farmer
Wm. Schrubbs, fisherman
Archie Leitch, farmer
Angus McLarty, farmer
Thos. Penfold, hotel proprietor
John McLarty, farmer

Dan Campbell, machine agent
John Summerville, farmer
Dugald McDougall, farmer
James McPherson, farmer
T.W. Kirkpatrick, banker and
1879 Warden of Elgin County.

The second picnic was held at the same place in 1899, and a decision was made that day to hold the 1900 picnic at Port Glasgow.

At the 1900 picnic water sports were held at the shore and games at the top of the hill. Races and tug-of-war were held on Douglas Street.

The 1901 picnic was held in the orchard of the John Speirn homestead (which is the same spot as it is to-day). A platform was built for the speakers and the Band. Booths were erected. Crowds increased from year to year, and a machinery building was rented to house the equipment that was bought, and to be used on picnic days.

The lunches at these earlier picnics were such as only Old-timers know anything about! People came long distances to spend a full day, and their horses taxed to capacity all nearby farm buildings. Many had to be tied to trees and fences half a mile away.