

THE EVOLUTION OF THE AGRICULTURAL FAIR IN THE NORTHWEST

The establishment of the agricultural fair or "cattle show" marks the first effective effort to improve the general conditions of farming in the United States.¹ The "literary" agricultural societies of the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with their exclusive gatherings, imposing memoirs, and select foreign correspondence, made little impress upon the husbandry of their day.² It was only when the new ideas were motivated and visualized in competitive exhibitions and the farmers themselves brought together for an interchange of experiences that a real beginning was made in the transformation of pioneer cultivation and stock breeding.

Agricultural shows, as distinct from the ancient market-fairs,³ had been held in England since 1777,⁴ and Washington had included premium granting exhibitions among the functions of the proposed nationally-subsidized board of agriculture which he urged upon Congress in his last mes-

¹ Agricultural progress "might almost be said to date from the establishment" of county agricultural societies working largely through their annual fairs said Secretary R. G. Baird.—*Report of Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1878, p. 575.

² Bidwell and Falconer's *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860*, p. 186.

³ Market fairs were held in all of the American colonies except Connecticut, and doubtless furnished precedents, especially on the social side, for the agricultural fair.—Andrews's *Colonial Folkways* (Chronicles of America Series, Vol. IX), pp. 120, 121; True's *The Early Development of Agricultural Societies in The United States* in the *Report of the American Historical Association*, 1920, pp. 303, 304.

⁴ Curtler's *A Short History of English Agriculture*, p. 233.

sage in 1796.⁵ From 1804 to 1806 three fairs combining market and exhibit features were held at the capital under the patronage of the first Commissioner of Patents.⁶

But the American agricultural fair as a permanent and distinctive institution dates from the promotive work of Elkanah Watson, who has quite justly been termed the "father of the agricultural fair."⁷ After founding his Berkshire Agricultural Society for the holding of annual cattle shows this tireless "agricultural missionary" carried on a successful agitation for his favorite institution throughout New England and in some ten additional States as far west as Ohio.⁸ From this parent Berkshire society, wrote the Commissioner of Patents in 1857, "sprang the system of agricultural societies and shows, as they exist at present, in most parts of the United States."⁹

At the start these American shows were doubtless modeled closely upon their English prototypes, but under the peculiar economic and social conditions of the New World the institution developed a distinctive character by the time fairs were established in the Northwest.¹⁰

⁵ Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. I, p. 202.

⁶ *Agricultural Education in the United States* in the *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture*, 1899, p. 160.

⁷ Butterfield's *Farmers' Social Organizations* in Bailey's *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, Vol. IV, p. 292.

⁸ Watson's *Men and Times of the Revolution or Memoirs of Elkanah Watson* (Second Edition), pp. 421-430, 456-458; *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1857, Agriculture, p. 23.

R. H. True holds that the exhibition of the Columbian Agricultural Society at Washington in 1810 slightly antedated the first regular fair of the Berkshire society.

⁹ *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1857, Agriculture, p. 23. See also Schafer's *History of Agriculture in Wisconsin*, p. 105.

¹⁰ As used in this paper, the term "Northwest" includes the five States of the "Old Northwest" and Iowa and Minnesota.

During the period of pioneer isolation, when there was no sufficient incentive to increased or bettered production and no adequate facilities for social intercourse, agricultural organization could have no place in western economy and society. But by about 1820, when the forces were beginning to stir which were to transform our agriculture from a largely self-sufficing to a commercial basis, such organizations began to appear, and they were destined to have a significant part in the transformation.

Ohio's first county agricultural society was organized in 1820 and held fairs "previous to 1828, and annually thereafter." In 1833 the legislature made provision for the formation of county societies and we have the rather indefinite record that "many societies have been organized in conformity with this act". Nearly all of these societies conducted fairs for a time, but "for want of public spirit and perhaps public sentiment" to sustain the good work the organizations were gradually discontinued until the act of 1846, providing an agricultural board and fund, led to a marked and permanent revival.¹¹

In Illinois a so-called State agricultural society was formed in 1819 and had a nominal existence through 1823 when the members, "becoming tired of keeping up their organization, turned over their surplus funds to the Sunday School agent . . . and disbanded." Meetings were held for the reading of papers but apparently there were no public exhibitions. In 1822 a county society was started and held annual fairs, at which premiums were offered for farm products as well as for wolf scalps. This continued until 1825 when its activities ceased. A district organization embracing nine northern counties was char-

¹¹ J. H. Klippart in the *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1859, p. 510; Burkett's *History of Ohio Agriculture*, pp. 191, 192.

tered in 1839 and held four fairs before its demise in 1846. In 1841 a second effort was made to found a State society but the project did not get beyond the organization stage. By this date at least four counties were holding fairs and during the next two years a score or more new societies were formed. Most of these ventures were premature, and by the end of the decade only two or three fairs were reported for the entire State. Such was the situation when the formation of a State agricultural society in 1853 aroused a new and lasting interest in both State and local exhibitions.¹²

The beginnings of agricultural fairs in other States of the group may be briefly summarized. Michigan's first fair-holding society, after unsuccessful attempts in the thirties, was launched in 1845. Fairs in Iowa followed closely upon agricultural settlement, being held in the first settled counties as early as 1841. Indiana fairs were considerably belated. They did not get under way until after the organization of a State board in the early fifties, but later they multiplied rapidly. In its first annual report the board observed that it was "very remarkable that a pursuit in which more than four-fifths of our population are engaged should have remained so long without that spirit of emulation which the meetings of county and State fairs are so well calculated to bring about. The public mind seems now to have waked up to the realization of something practical; and each man asks for himself the best system, the best mode, the best manner of reaping the rewards of the labor bestowed on the soil."¹³

¹² W. C. Flagg in *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 1869-1870, pp. 209-211, and *Transactions of the Department of Agriculture of the State of Illinois*, 1875, pp. 338-340.

¹³ *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society*, 1852, p. 285; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1877, p. 647; Chase's

The county society movement in Wisconsin was not fully under way until about the time that the State society was founded in 1851, but apparently one or two local organizations were holding fairs some time previously.¹⁴ Minnesota fairs were started early in the territorial period. The first two county societies were organized in 1852, a third in 1853, and in 1854 the first fair was held by the Hennepin County society. The same year a territorial society was organized and from 1855 to 1860, with the exception of one year, this society and that of Hennepin held joint fairs.¹⁵

The development of State organizations and fairs naturally followed these local activities. Michigan was the first of the group to hold a State exhibition. Her society was chartered in the spring of 1849 and the first fair was held that fall on a farm near Detroit. Ohio's State board was created in 1846, and the first fair under its auspices was conducted at Cincinnati in October, 1851. After various unsuccessful attempts at organization in Wisconsin, "members of the legislature, leading farmers and stock-raisers, and other prominent citizens" met at the capital in March, 1851, and established a State society. Their first fair was held the following October at Janesville. The Indiana fair board was organized in 1851 and conducted

Rural Michigan, p. 336; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1890, p. 114; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, p. xxiv; *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1858, Agriculture, pp. 113-122; Esarey's *A History of Indiana from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, pp. 823, 824.

¹⁴ *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1852, p. 118; Schafer's *History of Agriculture in Wisconsin*, p. 105. In 1889 the oldest county society in continuous existence was one formed in July, 1851.—*Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1889, p. 173.

¹⁵ *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1916, p. 281; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 7-47.

its initial exhibition at Indianapolis in October, 1852. After Illinois's two abortive attempts at State organization no definite steps were taken until January, 1853, when, under the impetus of the "industrial movement" in education and the leadership of the Sangamon County society, a State society was organized and conducted the first State fair at Springfield the following October.¹⁶

Iowa's State society and fair were the direct outgrowth of the work of leaders in local societies in the southeastern part of the Commonwealth. In October, 1853, the Jefferson County society issued a call for a meeting to organize a State agricultural society and offered their grounds for the first exhibition. Attention was called to the fact that Iowa was the only free State in the Union without such an organization.¹⁷ The following December the society was launched and its president issued an appeal to the farmers for support. The first fair was held according to schedule at Fairfield in October, 1854.¹⁸ Minnesota staged its first State-sponsored exhibition on the eve of the Civil War. Early in 1860 the legislature authorized the change of the

¹⁶ *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1906, p. 347; Chase's *Rural Michigan*, p. 332; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1851, p. 49; Schafer's *History of Agriculture in Wisconsin*, p. 104; *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture*, 1875, p. 467; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, p. xxi; Esarey's *A History of Indiana From 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, pp. 823-824, 844; *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society, 1853-1854*, pp. 1, 38-42; Cole's *Era of the Civil War (Centennial History of Illinois, Vol. III)*, pp. 78, 79.

¹⁷ This statement was not strictly accurate as California at this time had no official organization. Unofficial "state fairs" were held at San Francisco from 1851 to 1853 inclusive, but an official State society was not authorized until May, 1854, the first fair under its direction being held the same year.—*Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society*, 1859, pp. 9, 10; *Statistical Report of the California State Board of Agriculture*, 1921, p. 414; Wickson's *Rural California*, pp. 286, 287.

¹⁸ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1874, pp. 485 ff.; Gue's *History of Iowa*, Vol. III, pp. 280, 281.

territorial organization into a State society, and in September of that year the first State fair was held at Fort Snelling.¹⁹

Statistics collected by the patent office in 1858 indicated a total of three hundred and eighty-one agricultural societies in these seven States. It is probable that the greater number of these societies conducted fairs, but it is impossible to verify this as only one hundred and forty had made direct returns when the report was published.²⁰

Compared with modern fairs these first western exhibitions were primitive and crude.²¹ It was the day of small things in agricultural organization. County fairs were two-day events and State fairs in the early years did not usually extend beyond three days. Grounds were small, usually under ten acres, and often not over one or two, and they were wholly unequipped. State fairs were "exhibitions on wheels" moving from one city to another as local inducements seemed to warrant. Transportation facilities, both for spectators and exhibits, were most inadequate. A contemporary recalls that the people came to the first Iowa State fair "on foot on horseback or in two wheeled carts, jogging along behind slow-moving, ponderous

¹⁹ *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1916, p. 281; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 47-64.

²⁰ *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1858, Agriculture, pp. 91-213.

²¹ For a description of the general conditions of early northwestern fairs see Sprague's *Agricultural Associations of Ohio* in the *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 1853-1854, p. 37; *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1858, Agriculture, pp. 92-213; *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture*, 1875, pp. 451-467; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, pp. xxii-xxviii; *History and Proceedings of the First Fair of the Iowa State Agricultural Society* in *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1874, pp. 485-581; *Twentieth Century Farmer*, quoted in *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1905, pp. 987, 988; *Breeders Gazette* quoted in the *Report of the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture*, 1919-1920, p. 218;

oxen."²² Minnesota's initial State exhibition was seriously handicapped, in a period of dependence upon natural waterways, by the abnormal shallowness of the river. Three years later the *St. Paul Pioneer* declared: "All attempts to get up a good State Fair will fail until our facilities for traveling are better than they are now."²³

As in the case of all other enterprises of the frontier States, the funds were most inadequate. Wisconsin's first State exhibition was financed by a few individuals and the outcome was so uncertain that no premiums were offered. Iowa's first State fair closed with a deficit which was made up by the president. Premiums awarded by the Michigan society at its first exhibitions could not all be paid.²⁴ Cash premiums were modest in the extreme; plate, in the early years, was sometimes used for the larger premiums. The highest awards were usually the societies' certificates. Membership, admission, and concession charges were correspondingly low. The complimentary list was generous, and the badge system of admissions was greatly overworked. Scant as the receipts were at best, they were further depleted by the passing off upon the gatekeepers

Des Moines Register, August 20, 29, 1924; *Mount Ayr (Iowa) Journal*, August 7, 1924; *Bedford (Iowa) Times-Republican*, August 11, 1924; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, Chs. III-VI; Burkett's *History of Ohio Agriculture*, p. 191; Hayes's *Wild Turkeys and Tallow Candles*, Ch. XI; Sanders's *At the Sign of the Stock Yard Inn*, pp. 270-275; Garland's *Boy Life on the Prairie* (Revised Edition), Ch. XXII, and *A Son of the Middle Border*, pp. 166-169.

²² *Fairfield Daily Ledger*, August 19, 1924.

²³ Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 58, 76.

²⁴ Schafer's *History of Agriculture in Wisconsin*, p. 104; *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture*, 1875, p. 467; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1874, p. 537; *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society*, 1856, pp. 18, 19.

of counterfeit money. Depreciated paper money must also have been a problem for the officials.

Exhibits in many lines were meagre and poorly classified. There was, in fact, considerable difficulty in making up the lists for the first fairs and in some cases those of established eastern fairs were taken as models. The basic work of judging, as carried on by a system of amateur and more or less impromptu committees, was bound to be inefficient and unsatisfactory in every way.

But in spite of all obstacles and limitation there were many highly encouraging signs. The opportunities for social gathering in pioneer Commonwealths were so limited that people were attracted from comparatively long distances and the attendance in most cases was remarkably large. Considering the stage of agricultural development, the exhibits in many lines were highly commendable. There was an almost unanimous verdict that succeeding exhibitions were marked improvements over the initial efforts. The characteristic western spirit of optimism and enthusiasm was in fact manifest from the start—a spirit reflected in the reminiscent comment of the historians of the Minnesota society: "Of all the fairs of history, from Donnybrook to Nijni-Novgorod, there was never one that gave greater satisfaction to those that witnessed it than the Fair at Fort Snelling in September, 1860."²⁵

In tracing the evolution of northwestern fairs, from their full establishment in the fifties to the present time,

²⁵ See for instance Esarey's *A History of Indiana from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, p. 845. The joint fair of 1855, according to the territorial newspapers, "brought together the largest concourse of white people that had ever assembled in Minnesota."—Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 31, 58. See also *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1851, p. 49; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1852, pp. 13-15; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1858, p. 4.

three rather definite periods or stages of development may be distinguished: (1) from the beginning to 1870; (2) from 1870 to about 1910; and (3) from 1910 down to the present.

The first period may be characterized as that of predominate agricultural leadership or in President Butterfield's phrase the "golden age" of the fair. At that time neither knowledge nor organization were highly specialized or differentiated and the whole burden of agricultural experimentation, instruction, extension, and recreation fell upon the agricultural societies whose work was carried on mainly through State and local fairs.²⁶

The fairs of this period were primarily educational.²⁷ In many respects the gatherings before the Civil War were more akin to the later farmers' institutes than to the modern fairs. They were founded upon the old cattle show, and the exhibition and judging of stock remained the central feature. The judging committees in their reports often gave the reasons for their awards and made suggestions of possible improvements in their respective classes. In a number of States the successful competitors were required to give a statement to the society "showing what was peculiar in the management of the crop, in the fabrication of the article, or in the mode of keeping and feeding the animal" that others might profit by example. In furthering their educational mission, both local and

²⁶ Butterfield's *Farmers' Social Organization* in Bailey's *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, Vol. IV, p. 292; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1898, p. 709; Rubinow's *Fairs and their Educational Value* in *North Carolina Extension Circular*, No. 69, p. 3; Gilbert's *The Food Supply of New England*, p. 113.

²⁷ In his address at the Wisconsin State fair in 1859 Abraham Lincoln compared the service rendered by fairs in stimulating new methods and devices to that of the Federal patent office.—*Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1858-1859, p. 288.

State societies frequently awarded agricultural books and subscriptions to agricultural papers as premiums.²⁸

Evening sessions were regular features of the early State fairs. These meetings were the occasion for the exchange of informal experiences by practical farmers and for the delivery of formal addresses by experts. Local fairs also had special lectures on their programs and offered premiums for essays on appropriate subjects of interest.²⁹

The "annual address" had a leading place at all western fairs throughout this period. It was delivered by the most notable personage available and, while usually not as technically informative as the "lecture", was regarded as a source of much general culture and inspiration.³⁰

²⁸ *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society*, 1852, pp. 6, 61 ff., 1856, p. 25; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1852, pp. 13, 29 ff., 1853, pp. 22-31, 99; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1853, pp. 10-15; Esarey's *A History of Indiana from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, p. 845; *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 1853-1854, p. 37; *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1858, Agriculture, p. 186.

²⁹ *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 1853-1854, p. 9; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1858, p. 91, 1860, pp. 59, 67, 75, 1861-1868, pp. 200-203; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1861-1868, p. 429; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, p. xxvi; *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1858, Agriculture, pp. 109, 147-150, 188, 210.

³⁰ Horace Greeley, whose agricultural talks were famous, delivered an address at the second Indiana State fair in 1853 and two at the Minnesota fair in 1865.—*Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1853, pp. 17-29; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 77, 83. Lincoln entertained the Wisconsin fair in 1859 with an address which by official report "was universally regarded as a highly instructive and valuable production."—*Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1858-1859, pp. 231, 287-299. Cassius M. Clay's effort in Wisconsin in 1858 was officially recorded as "noble and masterly", but of his appearance two years later in Minnesota the historian's comment was that "Neither the matter nor the manner of his speech was engaging."—Hall and Holcombe's *His-*

Even press reports of the State fairs were at times made the objects of competition by premiums for the best "history" of the exhibition. The resulting reports provided some remarkable displays of journalistic rhetoric.³¹

Amusement features of these days were strictly subordinated to instruction. So far as possible such entertainment as was provided was made to contribute to the main serious purpose. Plowing matches were regular attractions and seem in the early years to have been conducted with care and to have aroused genuine interest.³² There was great opposition to horse racing or "trials of speed" and as a result these attractions were to a considerable extent denatured.³³ In many of the early fairs the horse racing consisted merely in the judging of horses one at a time as to speed and driving qualities. These speed trials were often so timed as not to distract the spectators' attention unduly from the more educational exhibits.³⁴

tory of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910, p. 62; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 1858-1859*, p. 45; Stephen A. Douglas, William H. Seward, and Edward Bates were among the national leaders who were sought for such addresses in the ante-bellum period.

³¹ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1857*, pp. 69, 70, and succeeding years of this period; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture, 1873*, p. 242.

³² *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society, 1852*, pp. 18, 87-89; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1857*, pp. 17, 26-28, 1858, pp. 114, 115.

³³ At an Iowa county fair in 1865 "speed" prizes were awarded as follows: \$1 to the fastest walking horse; \$1 to the fastest trotting horse; \$1 to the fastest horse under the saddle. The racing was regarded as extravagance by most of the directors of the fair.—*Bedford Times-Republican*, August 11, 1924.

³⁴ *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society, 1856*, pp. 24, 30, 37; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1857*, pp. 23, 24, 1858, p. 60; *Report of Ohio State Board of Agriculture, 1858*, pp. 176, 177, 1863, p. 128.

By far the most popular event of a sportive nature at the early western fairs was the women's riding contest, the so-called "female equestrianism". Even this diversion, which in the judgment of one reporter at the first Iowa State fair was "the most pleasing event in the history of the State", met the disapproval of puritanical and penurious critics and had to be defended as a safety measure, on the ground that if women were expected to ride or drive through the crowded streets of cities "they must become adepts in the art, or they become liable to many accidents."³⁵

With rare exceptions these early exhibitions were orderly and circumspect in every way. The good report from Ohio in 1862 was echoed by her sister States throughout the period: "Not a pocket was picked upon the grounds, not a drunken man inside the inclosure. All there was order."³⁶ The only police problem was that of vendors and showmen outside the grounds, and efforts were made to suppress or regulate these offenders.³⁷ Generally speaking these early northwestern fairs were gatherings of plain-living, serious-minded country folk. An inter-state visitor in 1859 contrasted the Kentucky and Ohio fairs by

³⁵ "At every fair in the early history of agricultural exhibitions in this country, the lady riders for prizes were conspicuous and attracted great attention and interest."—Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 33. See also *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1874*, pp. 546-553; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 1861-1868*, pp. 240, 310, 1869, pp. 119, 120; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, 1869*, p. 247; *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society, 1856*, pp. 23, 24.

³⁶ *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture, 1851*, p. 19, 1862, p. 122; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 1853*, p. 13; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, throughout this period.

³⁷ *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture, 1856*, p. 156; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1857*, pp. 17, 18.

the respective terms "metropolitan" and "rustic", "dressed" and "homespunish".³⁸

During this formative period, the normal revenues³⁹ were inadequate, and even these were rendered uncertain by the constant menace of unfavorable fall weather. As a result public aid was necessary and some measure of it was granted in all but one of these States. State societies were subsidized in amounts ranging from a few hundred dollars per annum in the first years to as high as three thousand by the later fifties. County societies were granted from twenty-five to two hundred dollars by State or county appropriation or by the two combined. The county portion was secured either from a mill tax or from certain license fees. County subsidies were conditioned in all cases upon the society's raising an equal sum by membership tickets or assessments, and, in many cases, upon the actual holding of fairs. The subsidies of both State and county societies were expended mainly in the payment of premiums.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Cincinnati Commercial*, quoted in the *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1859, p. 86.

³⁹ In this period annual membership tickets for both State and local societies were usually one dollar and life memberships from five to fifty dollars. Single admission tickets were usually twenty-five cents. As already indicated there was much abuse in the giving of complimentary tickets and free passes.

⁴⁰ *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1858, Agriculture, pp. 98-213; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1851, pp. 132, 134, 137, 138; *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 1853-1854, pp. vi, 35, 42, 1859-1860, p. 698; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1853, p. vii; *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society*, 1853, pp. 22, 23, 1855, pp. 11, 12; *Transactions of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1904, pp. 304, 305; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1858-1859, pp. 11, 13-15; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1860, p. 53, 1864, p. 5, 1875, pp. 30, 31; *Harding's County Fairs as Community Builders and State Support in Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture*, March, 1924, p. 16. The frontier State of Minnesota was the member of the group in which no aid was given in this period.—Hall and

That these subsidies or subventions, State and local, made manifold returns to the agriculture of the Northwest there is definite and abundant evidence. In the "transformation" of middle western agriculture between the thirties and the seventies⁴¹ fairs had a prominent and effective part. Agricultural exhibitions took the lead as agencies in improving live stock, in disseminating information regarding new varieties of plants and better methods of cultivation, in stimulating the invention and popularizing the use of new machinery, in advertising the products and the productive possibilities of the new regions.⁴²

By 1860 agricultural fairs, both State and local, had become well established in the Northwest, as well as in the other sections of the country,⁴³ but the Civil War had a most unsettling and depressing effect upon the institution. The Indiana, Wisconsin, and Minnesota State fairs were suspended in 1861 on account of the occupation of their grounds by troops or other mobilizing activities.⁴⁴ The

Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 49.

⁴¹ Carver's *Historical Sketch of American Agriculture* in Bailey's *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, Vol. IV, pp. 58-64.

⁴² *Report of the Commissioner of Patents*, 1858, Agriculture, pp. 92 ff.; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1856, pp. 150-152, 1880, pp. 425-428; *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 1867-1868, p. xi; Cole's *Era of the Civil War (Centennial History of Illinois, Vol. III)*, pp. 79, 383; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 28; Burkett's *History of Ohio Agriculture*, pp. 194, 195; Rubinow's *Fairs and Their Educational Value in North Carolina Extension Circular*, No. 69, p. 3.

⁴³ Carver's *Historical Sketch of American Agriculture* in Bailey's *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, Vol. IV, p. 64.

⁴⁴ Esarey's *A History of Indiana from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, p. 846; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1861-1868, pp. 85-92; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 67.

Iowa grounds were vacated only three days previous to the scheduled opening of the fair and there was much sentiment for omitting the exhibition altogether.⁴⁵ In 1862 Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa held the only State fairs in the Northwest.⁴⁶ Their exhibits in most lines were below normal, but the attendance was surprisingly good.⁴⁷ By 1863 all the States except Wisconsin had resumed their annual exhibitions and in 1864 that State's grounds were again available for the arts of peace. During the war period, however, State aid was greatly reduced or entirely suspended and expenditures were retrenched in every way possible.⁴⁸

County and district fairs were equally hard hit by war conditions. Military occupation of grounds, Indian uprisings, Confederate invasions, enlistments, and general unrest all contributed, in different parts of the agricultural section, to the difficulties of agricultural exhibitions. Many of the societies suspended their activities either temporarily or permanently; but others, recognizing their obligation to "carry on", made ventures which were rewarded by remarkably successful exhibitions, both in regard to exhibits and attendance.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1861-1862*, pp. 3, 4. Page 49 of this report contains a quotation from the *Iowa City Republican*.

⁴⁶ *Dubuque Herald*, quoted in *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1861-1862*, p. 172.

⁴⁷ *Ohio Farmer*, quoted in *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture, 1862*, pp. 99, 100; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1861-1862*, pp. 130, 131; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, 1869*, pp. xxviii-xxix.

⁴⁸ *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 1861-1868*, pp. 103, 191, 199; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture, 1869*, p. xxviii; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1861-1862*, p. 130.

⁴⁹ *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture, 1861*, p. xi; *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society, 1861-1864*, pp. 34, 35; *Transactions*

The decade of the sixties was a period of great, and to some degree premature and unsound, expansion of northwestern agriculture. Abnormal war demands and abnormally expanded foreign markets with the productive possibilities of new land and new machinery and the elusive stimulus of an inflated currency created boom times which, after the war, were inevitably succeeded by depression.⁵⁰ Amid these years of storm and stress for their constituencies the agricultural societies and boards were confronted with new problems and new opportunities.

The second general period of northwestern fair development was from 1870 to 1910 and may be characterized as one of transition and readjustment. These are the years of the most revolutionizing transformations in American agriculture, including the vast expansion of production, the rise of class-conscious farmers' organizations, the development of agricultural education, and a general extension of governmental activities.⁵¹ The fairs inevitably reflected the conditions. With the development of specialized functions and institutions the exhibition could no longer be an inclusive agency of agricultural improvement. But, through coöperation with the new agencies and in the

of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 1861-1868, pp. 66, 67, 102; Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1861-1862, pp. 129, 130; Bedford (Iowa) Times-Republican, August 11, 1924; Hall and Holcombe's History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910, p. 67; reports of county and district societies in the various State reports.

⁵⁰ Fite's *The Agricultural Development of the West during the Civil War* in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. XX, pp. 259-278; Ruggles's *The Economic Basis of the Greenback Movement in Iowa and Wisconsin* in *Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, 1912-1913*, pp. 142-162; Buck's *The Granger Movement*, pp. 7, 8.

⁵¹ Schmidt's *Some Significant Aspects of the Agrarian Revolution in the United States* in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 371-395.

general educational and social progress of the period, there were greater opportunities for enlarged activity and service.

The most immediate problems of this period concerned the material growth of the fairs and the consequent financial obligations. Chief among these material developments was the permanent location of the State fairs. The itinerant system of exhibitions best met the pioneer needs. Because of the lack of connected transportation facilities the pioneer fairs could serve the farming interests of their States most effectively by extending their benefits periodically from section to section.⁵²

To the societies, too, with their limited resources, the inter-sectional rivalry insured the largest support. It soon became a regular practice to locate the fair in the city offering the best inducements in the way of expense guarantees and equipment. In some cases representatives of the rival cities appeared before the committee to present their respective claims and inducements after which the selection was made by ballot.⁵³ Some of the societies formulated definite minimum requirements. The grounds provided were usually those of a county or district society. Considerable alteration and addition of buildings and track and sometimes expansion of area were necessary and

⁵² *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1858, p. 22; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1869, pp. 35, 36; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, pp. 311, 312, 1870, pp. 229, 230, 1873, p. 153, 1877, pp. 460, 461.

⁵³ *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society*, 1853, p. 18, 1854, p. 17, 1856, p. 33; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1870, pp. 237-239, 248, 249; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1856, p. 14, 1861, pp. 1, 2; *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 1859-1860, p. 19; *Transactions of the Illinois State Department of Agriculture*, 1871, pp. 12-14; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1870, pp. 103-107.

these expenses at times were shared by the State society.⁵⁴ In practice the system had serious disadvantages. City guarantees were sometimes paid tardily or not at all and the society was thus involved in debt; some of the cities with over-enthusiastic boosters were unable to provide adequate patronage; bitter sectional jealousy led to boycotts; and, worst of all, continuity of policies and consistent growth was prevented.⁵⁵ During the sixties and seventies a partial compromise was made in all of the States of the section by holding the fair in a single city for a term of years ranging from two to five.⁵⁶

With the extension of railroad connections and the need for more ample accommodations and more elaborate equipment, the desirability of a permanent location was generally recognized; but, with one exception, such provisions were not made before the eighties. The Indiana society secured property at the State capital as early as 1860 and

⁵⁴ *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1868, p. 79; *Transactions of the Illinois State Department of Agriculture*, 1877, pp. 22, 23; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1861-1868, pp. 423, 424; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1857, p. 19, 1861-1862, p. 172, 1867, pp. 23, 24, 1871, p. 41; *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society*, 1856, p. 20; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, pp. 308-311, 1883, p. 353.

⁵⁵ *Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society*, 1856, p. 28; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, pp. 22, 23; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 41, 45, 135-157, 163, 164; *Transactions of the Illinois State Department of Agriculture*, 1872, p. 2; Esarey's *A History of Indiana from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, p. 846; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1861-1862, p. 50.

⁵⁶ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1866, pp. 19, 20; *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 1867-1868, pp. xi, xii; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1869, p. 113; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1874, pp. 9, 10, 1879, pp. 9-11; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 90; Esarey's *A History of Indiana from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, pp. 846, 847.

held its fairs there regularly after 1868.⁵⁷ In 1870 Wisconsin's society purchased grounds at Madison for periodical use but the permanent location at Milwaukee was not made until 1891.⁵⁸ The Ohio fair board in 1881 negotiated a twenty-five year lease with the Franklin County society for the use of its grounds at Columbus, but a misunderstanding regarding the terms soon developed and two years later new grounds near the capital were purchased.⁵⁹ Iowa agricultural leaders were seeking an establishment at Des Moines in the later seventies but they did not secure a permanent location until 1885.⁶⁰ After a long and bitter contest between the traditionally rival "Twin Cities", a compromise was finally reached in 1885 in the location of the Minnesota State fair in the "Midway" district.⁶¹

The Michigan society went through numerous vicissitudes before reaching a permanent abode. In the course of the fair's migrations considerable property had been accumulated in two different cities and it was planned for a time to secure regular establishments at three or four points at which the fairs would be held in turn. In 1889, however, after the legislature had altered the society's legal status, local influence secured the purchase of one permanent ground at Lansing. Development costs and a series of unusual reverses involved the society so heavily

⁵⁷ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, pp. xxvii, xxviii; Esarey's *A History of Indiana from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, p. 847.

⁵⁸ *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1870, pp. 97, 98, 1892, pp. 30, 31.

⁵⁹ *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1881, pp. 21-23, 27, 28, 1883, pp. 27-46, 1885, pp. 54, 55.

⁶⁰ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1879, pp. 104, 105, 1881, p. 229, 1883, p. 259, 1884, pp. 254, 277, 278, 283, 293, 1885, pp. 60, 61.

⁶¹ Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 162-193.

in debt that this property was relinquished to the heaviest creditors and the itinerant system resumed until 1904 when a final location was made at Detroit.⁶² The permanent location of the Illinois fair at the capital city was postponed until 1894 largely by reason of legal incompetence.⁶³ In nearly all cases the development of the properties thus secured necessitated large immediate expenditures for buildings and other equipment. County and district organizations, in accord with the spirit and needs of the time, were branching out proportionately.

Essential as these outlays were for the continued progress of the fairs, they involved heavy burdens in a period of agricultural depression. Fairs like all other activities dependent upon farmer support were hard hit by the cycle of falling prices and financial depression and added to the abnormal financial unsettlements were the risks due to the uncertainty of Middle Western weather, which often involved serious losses in an undertaking with such heavy investments at stake.⁶⁴ World fairs and other special expositions had a generally unfavorable influence upon the regular course of agricultural fairs. The unusual attractions of the national exposition meant suspension or greatly lessened support for the State enterprise. Often they set abnormally high or unsound standards in exhibits and

⁶² *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture, 1881-1882*, p. 530, 1889, pp. 559-561, 1899, p. 437, 1905, pp. 549-551.

⁶³ *Transactions of the Illinois State Department of Agriculture, 1871*, p. 2, 1894, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture, 1874*, p. 212, 1875, p. 487, 1877, p. 650, 1898, p. 710, 1900, p. 408; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1875*, p. 28, 1893, pp. 11, 12, 107, 1896, p. 113; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 1896*, p. ii; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 121, 123, 126, 255, 256; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture, 1880*, p. 34; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture, 1897-1898*, pp. 58, 59.

amusements.⁶⁵ The urban patrons, to whom the State fairs catered more and more, were somewhat fickle in their support, and the high priced attractions which their taste demanded often did not make compensating returns.⁶⁶

Such a combination of unfavorable conditions meant for all of the societies a hard struggle and for some disaster. The Indiana board in 1873 promoted, most inopportunistly, a special "exposition". The ensuing panic cut in half the expected attendance and ruined many of the guarantors.⁶⁷ The Wisconsin State society, which could rejoice in its sound and flourishing condition at the time of the dedication of its new grounds, was eventually bankrupted by the undertaking, and the legislature, after providing for the

⁶⁵ Centennial of 1876—*Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1877, p. v; *Transactions of the Illinois State Department of Agriculture*, 1877, p. 7; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1873, p. 105; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1876, p. 482.

Ohio Centennial, 1888—*Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1887, p. 21.

World's Fair, Chicago, 1893—*Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1891, p. 177, 1892, pp. 109-113, 1893, pp. 11, 12, 1896, p. 89; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1894, p. ii; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1894, p. 510; *Transactions of the Illinois State Department of Agriculture*, 1911, p. 438; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 246.

Omaha Trans-Mississippi Exposition, 1898—*Report of Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1897, pp. 113, 114, 116, 1898, p. 21.

St. Louis Exposition, 1904—*Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1904, p. 97; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1904, pp. viii, 474.

⁶⁶ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1883, pp. 38-42; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1894, p. 9, 1896, pp. 89, 90, 1897, p. 113; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1905, pp. 4, 5, 1910, pp. 329, 330; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 314, 376; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1875-1876, p. 58; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1910, p. 557.

⁶⁷ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1878, pp. 86-88.

debt, established a new State board.⁶⁸ The Iowa society, after the failure of its fair in 1894, insisted upon guarantors before undertaking the next year's exhibition.⁶⁹ Michigan's financial trials have already been noted. Fairs in the other States ran at a loss in the panic years. Local societies were equally hard hit by the period of agricultural depression.

State aid was sought as never before, both for temporary relief and permanent improvement. In general the tendency through the period of hard times extending to the later nineties was to tide the societies along by a loan or by a partial payment of indebtedness without making adequate provision for the future. By the beginning of the century, however, more generous and constructive policies were adopted. Larger and regular appropriations were procured to care for deficits and to extend and enlarge various recognized features of the exhibitions.⁷⁰ Along with this increased aid went closer control. The first decades of the century mark the creation of State agricultural departments in place of the semi-independent societies or boards and the consequent establishment of the State fair as a

⁶⁸ *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1892, p. 183; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1897-1898, pp. 7-12, 1906, p. 314.

⁶⁹ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1894, p. 9, 1895, pp. 23, 24.

⁷⁰ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1875, p. 30, 1877, p. 531, 1878, pp. 39, 40, 1880, p. 183, 1886, pp. 54, 570, 1894, pp. 8, 9, 1896, p. 117; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1903, p. 77, 1904, p. 98, 1908, p. 138; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1880, p. 34; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1893, pp. 509, 510, 1901, p. 362, 1904, pp. 304, 305; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1893, pp. 33, 186, 1895, p. 96; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1905, pp. 5, 6, 1906, p. 314, 1908, p. 346; Esarey's *A History of Indiana from 1850 to the Present*, Vol. II, p. 847; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 159.

regular State activity.⁷¹ County fairs were also subjected to increased regulations.

Educational features reflected the new ideas and interests. Plowing matches were discontinued. The evening discussion meetings declined and could not be revived, and the address was abandoned or given a secondary place, as only a speaker of national prominence could keep the crowds from the visual attractions, and even such celebrities not for too long a time. As early as 1864 "Long John" Wentworth in declining to address a Michigan fair pithily expressed the attitude of the new generation: "Most societies have abandoned that part of their early programme, and I concur in their wisdom. People want to see the show, and not to hear addresses. I have had innumerable invitations from States and societies, and have always declined, because I have seen how illy able much better men than myself have been to compete with the animals that the public come to see."⁷²

During this period the fairs found their chief instructional opportunities in coöperating with the new educational agencies. Agricultural college exhibits had an ever-increasing prominence. Farmers' institutes were sometimes conducted during the fair. All departments and agencies having to do with the industrial interests of the State found an opportunity to give their work publicity.⁷³

⁷¹ Wiest's *Agricultural Organization in the United States*, pp. 297, 601-611; *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture*, 1919, p. 500.

⁷² *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1875, pp. 513, 514, 1879, p. 452; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 279. For a personal experience in 1889, see Garland's *A Son of the Middle Border*, pp. 406, 407.

⁷³ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1876, pp. 40, 41, 1879, pp. 102, 103, 1880, pp. 80-82, 1882, p. 336, 1892, p. 127; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1903, p. 667; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*,

The stock-judging work was put upon a scientific basis by the substitution of expert judges for the old amateur committees.⁷⁴

On the borderline between educational exhibit and pure amusement was horse racing, an activity that in this period attained major proportions. During a great part of the period this was one of the most discussed problems at State agricultural conventions and meetings of county fair associations. For years a strong opposition to horse racing as a regular feature of agricultural exhibitions was maintained. It was argued that such displays were wholly extraneous to the real business of agriculture, that they absorbed an undue proportion of premium funds, distracted attention from the real exhibits, and worst of all, horse racing inevitably involved jockeying and gambling.⁷⁵

In reply, the defenders urged that the development of the race horse was a legitimate and important branch of stock breeding to be recognized and encouraged the same as the other branches; that racing as an attraction made a unique appeal to the normally-minded human being and was essential in maintaining the patronage of the exhibit as a whole — especially the city patronage; that the net

1875, p. 404; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1906, p. 315; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, p. 235.

⁷⁴ *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1877, p. 497, 1879, p. 457, 1880-1881, p. 603; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1881, pp. 222-224; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1884, p. 40, 1887, p. 84, 1889, p. 174; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1902, pp. 349, 350, 1907, pp. 375-394.

⁷⁵ *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1861-1868, p. 277, 1871, p. 86, 1872-1873, pp. 144, 145; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1867, pp. 267, 268, 376, 377, 1869, pp. 340, 341, 1870, p. 220, 1872, pp. 82, 83, 1875, pp. 398, 399; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 95, 96, 119.

cost was low; and finally that the abuses often associated with this instructive sport were not essential to it and by proper supervision might be eliminated. Some societies acted on the courage of their convictions to the extent of eliminating the racing premiums temporarily and recognizing speed merely as one element in the road horse "driven by the owner".

A device for shifting the financial if not the moral responsibility was to allow the making up of so-called "citizens' premiums" by outside parties.⁷⁶ However the overwhelming popularity of this attendant if not essential feature of all agricultural fairs finally broke down all opposition and before long the staid societies were joining racing circuits and competing for the fullest and fastest cards. Indeed the devout conclusion of a report of a racing superintendent would seem to indicate the conviction that the highest moral sanction had come to attach to this part of the annual exhibition: "There was prompt starting and no collisions; Providence favored the entire meeting."⁷⁷

The horse race thus secured in this period a permanent and prominent place upon the fair program, becoming as legitimate as stock-judging and, to the average spectator, far more attractive. The problem of general amusements — an ever changing as well as ever-expanding one — could

⁷⁶ *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1861-1868, p. 240, 1892, p. 327, 1893, p. 183, 1895, p. 81; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1902, pp. 354, 356, 361, 1906, pp. 317-319; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1880, pp. 431, 432; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1890, p. 599; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 119, 277; *Twentieth Century Farmer*, quoted in the *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1869, p. 358, 1905, p. 1000; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1867, pp. 318, 400, 1869, p. 358, 1870, pp. 225, 244, 245, 1875, pp. 424, 514, 515, 1876, p. 483, 1878, p. 478, 1879, p. 456.

⁷⁷ *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1895, p. 81.

not be disposed of so definitely. In the field of legitimate amusements the period marked a regular progression. To the mild and chaste equestrianism was added "velocopedestrianism" to be succeeded by bicycle races, balloon ascensions, automobile races, and, just at the end of the period, aeroplane demonstrations. World champion race horses like Nancy Hanks, Maude S., Jay Eye See, and Dan Patch were hired for princely sums to race against time. In the sixties came baseball and especially in the local fairs these games remained a permanent attraction. The most striking acts of the circus and the hippodrome were introduced between the heats of the races. Freakish and bizarre attractions, like "locomotive collisions", were at times resorted to to draw a crowd. To entertain the city spectator night shows were developed in which modern pyrotechnics were utilized for spectacular enactments of the fall of Pompeii, the burning of Manila, and the sieges of Moscow and Port Arthur. The lengthening of the State fair beyond a week presented the problem of a Sunday program. In the earlier years a sermon by a nationally prominent minister was provided; later an elaborate musical concert, with or without a brief address, made the widest popular appeal.⁷⁸

All of these attractions, though in some cases subject to

⁷⁸ Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 101, 245, 267, 279, 286, 287, 331, 366, 389; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1869, pp. 101, 247; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1874, p. 257, 1900, p. 409, 1901, p. 334, 1908, p. 420, 1910, p. 557; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1905, p. 111, 1906, pp. 5, 6, 1908, pp. 3, 6; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1879, p. 101, 1882, p. 68, 1884, p. 61, 1888, p. 97, 1890, p. 104; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1904, p. 98; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1869, p. 121; *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1921, p. 33; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1901, p. 237; *Report of the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture*, 1915-1916, p. 129.

criticism as to emphasis and appropriateness, were above question morally. There were other features of the fairs of the period, however, which could not be given such a clean bill. Chief of these questionable or wholly objectionable excrescences were games of chance, shows and carnivals, and the sale of intoxicants. The lowering of moral standards following the Civil War, unduly rapid urbanization of the fairs following the permanent establishments, and the rise of the street carnival and the world's fair midway, along with the temptation to the management to profit from these questionable concessions, all contributed to the demoralizing commercialization of the agricultural exhibition. Local fairs followed the State exhibitions in adopting these unfortunate innovations as the State fairs did the international expositions. The W. C. T. U. and other reform organizations were tireless in bringing these derelictions to official attention. State laws gave the needed powers and the overwhelming sentiment of the fairs' true constituencies brought about such an increasingly effective administration of the laws that before the end of the period the most conspicuous offenders were effectively excluded.⁷⁹

It was evident that the old-time cattle show was being decidedly modified by the new conditions and interests, modified it seemed to some in ways which tended from the true

⁷⁹ *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1875, p. 513, 1876, p. 592, 1877, p. 502, 1878, p. 492, 1879, p. 456, 1880, p. 356, 1881-1882, pp. 605, 606, 610, 1884, pp. 377-380, 1888, p. 482, 1896, p. 506; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1877, pp. 530, 531, 1879, p. 96; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1880-1881, p. 25, 1881-1882, p. 26, 1884, pp. 44-53, 1888, p. iii, 1896, p. ii; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the Annual Meeting of 1910*, pp. 157, 244; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1872, p. 21, 1877, p. 73; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1882, p. 30, 1887, p. 21; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1905, p. 5; *The Outlook*, November 2, 1907, p. 475; *Twentieth Century Farmer*, quoted in the *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1905, p. 999.

purpose. The innovations were not made without vigorous protests from those who contended for keeping the institutions strictly to their original mission and excluding all distractions, whether in themselves moral or not. Thus the secretary of the county fair association of Michigan in the early eighties vividly pictured the existing abuses as they appeared to him: "An honest granger, desirous of visiting Art hall,—mistakes the entrance, and plunges unceremoniously into a bear den; or, into the dangerous midst of a band of painted, blood-thirsty, scalping savages. Seeking to escape, he rushes suddenly into the awful presence of the 'Circassion Beauty', that captivating syren, that has infested agricultural fairs, ever since the birth of the oldest inhabitant. Why should these institutions spread their tents, and rasp the air with their speeches, tom-toms and hand-organs, in the very heart and centre of the fair ground."⁸⁰

A year later the president of the Wisconsin State fair association denounced "the gaudy shows, gambling devices, organ-grinding, conjuring, mountebankism and every species of graceless vagabondism, which we have admitted to our grounds, augmenting the inconvenience, confusion and discomfort that in some sort is necessarily attendant upon our expositions."⁸¹ And at the dedication of the Iowa State fair grounds J. B. Grinnell⁸² expressed his opposition to the new tendencies: "I would bar the gates forever to gamblers, jockeys, whiskey venders, and oleomargarine frauds, and leave reptilian monsters, with acrobats, pigmies and fat women to the showman, Barnum. Then write over your portals, dedicated to art, animal industry and

⁸⁰ *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture, 1881-1882, p. 605.*

⁸¹ *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 1884, p. 38.*

⁸² *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society, 1886, p. 96.*

agriculture". These sentiments were reëchoed here and there throughout the period but with constantly decreasing emphasis and volume.

On the other hand amusements were strongly defended as a necessary and proper part of the modern fair, which it was held should be all things to all men — education to those who would be instructed, entertainment to those who would not, recreation and benefit to all. There were even department managers to defend and present a constructive view of the fakir himself and to maintain that the "fakir is as essential to the fair as is the fair to the fakir".⁸³

That the northwestern fairs, especially the State fairs, had departed decidedly from the old ways there could be no doubt. In every respect they were bigger, in variety of interests and activities they were broader, but as to whether or not they served their purpose relatively better opinions were bound to differ. Inevitably with the acquisition of urban patronage and the broadening of the educational and recreational interests of the rural constituency the exhibitions could not be as strictly and narrowly agricultural and so exclusively didactic. With the radically changed conditions of the times comparison of the relative merits of the fairs of the two periods is impossible, but, at any rate, it is probable that the fairs of the Middle West were keeping more nearly to the appropriate functions and spirit of the agricultural show than were those of the East.⁸⁴

The increase in the number of those attending and the

⁸³ *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1903, pp. 344-348; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1899, p. 438, 1901, p. 341.

⁸⁴ For a strong indictment of the urbanized State fair based mainly upon conditions in the East, see an editorial in *The Independent*, August 13, 1908, pp. 389-391. About the same period "The Spectator" in *The Outlook*, November 2, 1907, pp. 474-476, described a typical middle western county fair in the most laudatory terms.

expansion in the activities of the northwestern fairs in this period necessitated a new basis of inter-fair relationships. One of the results of the permanent location of the State fairs, as well as of the growth of aspiring urban centres, was the promotion of independent regional "expositions", thus increasing the number of competing exhibitions.⁸⁵ For some time the inter-fair relations remained largely competitive or hostile. There were needlessly conflicting dates both within and between States and a failure to coöperate effectively in matters of exhibits and other attractions.⁸⁶ The spirit of organized effort that was developing in every line during the post-bellum years, however, was reflected in the development of inter-fair associations of various sorts. Regional circuits avoided costly conflicts in dates and led to a more effective utilization of exhibits, race horses, and special features.⁸⁷

State, county, and district fair associations provided clearing-houses for the consideration of common problems, the formulation of policies, and the fixing of standards.⁸⁸ In 1894 the International Association of Fairs and Expositions was formed as a general confederating agency for the

⁸⁵ For examples see the *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1873-1874, p. 152, 1891, p. 408; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1878, p. 29; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1910, p. 329.

⁸⁶ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1869, p. 89; *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1872, p. 28; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1873-1874, p. 207, 1875, p. 516.

⁸⁷ *Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture*, 1881, p. 51; *Report of the Ohio State Board of Agriculture*, 1884, p. 52; *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1885, p. 582; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1905, p. 999; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1881-1882, p. 447; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1881-1882, p. 26, 1895, p. 70.

⁸⁸ *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1875, p. 515, 1878, pp. 581, 582; *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1915, p. 205, 1920, pp. 214, 215; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1913, pp. 215 ff.

larger fairs of this country and Canada.⁸⁹ Inter-regional and inter-State visitations of fair officials became a regular practice.⁹⁰ In the case of fairs, as of all other corporate activities of the period, it was increasingly evident that State boundaries were often artificial. Independent associations sought inter-State support and State fairs, in a number of instances, were so situated that they regularly drew spectators and exhibitors from two or more States.⁹¹

After about 1910 we are in the period of the present-day fair, with organizations and activities reflecting the economic, educational, and social conditions of the present. The modernizing changes that were coming in at the end of the previous period are now fully developed. As official functions for which the Commonwealth is responsible, maintenance of the State fairs is assured. The larger exhibitions are growing to enormous size with total attendance records running to the half million. Elaborately specialized grounds and equipment and highly systematized organization, with an expert manager utilizing the latest methods in publicity promotion are in line with modern business efficiency.⁹² On the other hand a decentralizing tendency

⁸⁹ The name was later changed to the "American Association" and then in turn the former designation was restored.—*Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions*, 1922, p. 95; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1902, pp. 14, 15, 1910, p. 21.

⁹⁰ *Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1873, p. 103; *Transactions of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society*, 1874-1875, pp. 33, 34; *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1910, p. 23; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1909, p. 160, 1910, p. 268, 1911, p. 320.

⁹¹ For examples see *Report of Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1910, p. 329.

⁹² For the present-day fair, see the current reports of the State agricultural departments; proceedings of the International Association; *American City*, May, 1921, pp. 479, 480; *Greater Iowa*, July, 1924, April, 1925; Gilbert's *The Food Supply of New England*, p. 115; Hall and Holcombe's *History of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society from its Organization in 1854 to the*

may be noted in the development in recent years of the "community fair".⁹³

Educational activities of State and regional fairs and, on a smaller scale, of county fairs are abreast of the latest developments and interests. Farm bureau and club exhibits, boys' and girls' encampments and judging contests, home economics displays, health clinics, visual instruction and radio demonstrations, agricultural engineering projects, as well as a great expansion and systematizing of all lines of animal and plant exhibits reflect directly the latest ideas and tendencies in applied science. Aesthetic interests are ministered to by little country theatre productions, elaborate pageants, operatic stars, and miniature art institutes.⁹⁴

Entertainment now instead of being tolerated as a necessary evil is regarded as one of the essential features of the fair, the great ideal of which is a balanced program of education and entertainment.⁹⁵ The amusements provided, involving as they do the triumph of modern inventive and

Annual Meeting of 1910, p. 390; *The Field and System on the Farm*, October, 1921, pp. 748-754.

⁹³ Morgan's *The Community Fair* (*Massachusetts Agricultural College Extension Bulletin*, No. 27); Gilbert's *The Food Supply of New England*, pp. 115, 116.

⁹⁴ For typical activities and expressions of expert opinion see *Report of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture*, 1910, pp. 308, 309, 334, 335; *Report of the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture*, 1915-1916, pp. 123, 124, 1921-1922, pp. 222, 223; *Report of the Michigan State Board of Agriculture*, 1911, p. 520; *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1915, pp. 15, 16, 233, 1916, p. 331, 1923, pp. 35, 36, 348; Rubinow's *Fairs and their Educational Value in North Carolina Extension Circular*, No. 69, passim.

⁹⁵ *Report of the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture*, 1915-1916, p. 106, 1917-1918, pp. 192, 193; *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1913, pp. 230, 231, 1915, p. 244, 1917, p. 237, 1923, pp. 346-348; Rubinow's *Fairs and their Educational Value in North Carolina Extension Circular*, No. 69, p. 6.

managerial genius, would have been regarded as miraculous by the past generation. Shows and carnivals, while necessitating constant censorship and periodical disciplining, have in general shown a marked trend toward higher standards.⁹⁶

To secure even a brief hearing in the midst of such educational advantages and entertainment enticements the speaker of the present day must be a person of extraordinary interest — the President, Vice President, Governor, or a figure of equal prominence. As one pragmatic county fair promoter said: "I think your speaker is just the same as your free attraction or your horses or any vaudeville show — if you haven't got a headliner I don't believe he is worth ten cents to you."⁹⁷

The large and permanent influence that agricultural fairs have come to exert was demonstrated in a striking way in the World War. As soon as war was declared the publicity bureau of the American Association of Fairs and Expositions formulated war service aims for the fairs, and when it was widely rumored that, owing to transportation limitations, the government would discourage the holding of fairs in the fall, the Association met at Washington in July to present their case directly. A subsequent report emphasized the fact that the fairs of the country had a combined

⁹⁶ Johnson's *Crooked Carnivals* in *The Country Gentleman*, April 25, 1925, pp. 7, 41; *Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions*, 1922, pp. 12-43, 60-67, 110; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1913, p. 331; *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1915, p. 13; *Report of the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture*, 1915-1916, p. 127; Gilbert's *Fairs and their Educational Value* in *North Carolina Extension Circular*, No. 69, p. 114.

⁹⁷ *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1916, p. 289. Among the speakers secured for northwestern fairs during the first quarter of the century were President Wm. H. Taft, W. J. Bryan, Warren G. Harding, James M. Cox, Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, and James J. Hill.

normal attendance of 32,000,000 and that they provided the most effective agency for war propaganda, reaching both in numbers and classes the people that were most needed to be lined up for war service. The plans of the fair managers were fully endorsed by the Food Administrator, by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of War, by the Council of National Defense, and by President Wilson "who told the Fair managers that he believed the state fairs had a great mission to perform this year in helping the government in its food production and conservation campaign, and that if the different agencies of the government did not co-operate with the Fairs, to notify him and he would see that they did."⁹⁸

The State societies formulated elaborate war programs involving stimulation of production, encouragement of conservation and the instilling of patriotism for their own exhibitions, and they also worked out similar programs on a smaller scale for the local fairs.⁹⁹ The Federal government, through the influence of the Association, coöperated with special war exhibits.¹⁰⁰ The fairs in the falls of 1917 and 1918 thus became war activities. In spite of unusual difficulties growing out of abnormally increased costs at all points, overcrowded transportation facilities, and the general unsettled conditions, the war fairs were remarkably successful. At the meeting of the American Association in the winter of 1917, when forty-six of the fifty-eight mem-

⁹⁸ *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society, 1917*, pp. 18-20.

⁹⁹ *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society, 1917*, pp. 18-21, 289-291, 1918, pp. 22, 200; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture, 1917*, pp. 66, 67, 246, 272, 274-276; *Report of the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture, 1917-1918*, pp. 190, 191; *Rubinow's Fairs and their Educational Value in North Carolina Extension Circular, No. 69*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁰⁰ *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society, 1918*, pp. 20, 21; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture, 1918*, p. 297; *Report of the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture, 1917-1918*, p. 201.

bers were represented, most of the societies reported fairs of record size and enthusiasm.¹⁰¹ Thus quickly and fully mobilizing their resources for the common cause, the agricultural fairs rendered a unique and highly effective war service.

At the high tide of agricultural prosperity immediately following the war, in the years 1919 and 1920, agricultural fairs reached the greatest prosperity in their history.¹⁰² The consequent depression inevitably affected attendances adversely,¹⁰³ but was not without its compensations, as the permanent, serious work of the fair was maintained while some of the spectacular superfluities were largely eliminated.¹⁰⁴ The years of trial in war and reconstruction have demonstrated that the modernized agricultural fair, like the agricultural college, has a definite field and a permanent mission.

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¹⁰¹ *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1917, pp. 267, 268, 289, 290; *Report of the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture*, 1917-1918, pp. 189, 190, 209; Rubinow's *Fairs and their Educational Value in North Carolina Extension Circular*, No. 69, p. 4.

¹⁰² "During the past few years the Fairs of this country have been riding upon a high tide of prosperity, and many conditions indicate that still further immediate advancement will be made".—Secretary-General Manager of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society in *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1919, p. 24. "The year 1920, the banner year with most fairs".—Vice President of the Eastern States Exposition in *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1923, p. 347.

¹⁰³ *Report of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society*, 1921, pp. 31-34, 310, 1922, p. 38; *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture*, 1921, p. 69.

¹⁰⁴ Compare *The Field and System on the Farm*, October, 1921, p. 748.