

The Sixtieth Year

1972 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the National Dairy Cattle Congress on its present grounds. The show has come a long way. So has the cow.

There were no cows in this country when the white man first came here. The first milker in America was brought to Jamestown in 1611. The first dairy herd, consisting of three heifers and a bull, was brought to Plymouth on the second voyage of the *Mayflower* in 1623. It was not until 1655 that William Pynchon discovered he could get milk from his cows during the winter by stall feeding. Until that time, milk production had been limited to spring, summer and fall, when pasture was available.

As the years passed, the Dairy Belt extended to the prairie lands of the Middle West. The five aristocrats of the dairy world, the Holstein, the Guernsey, the Jersey, the Brown Swiss and the Ayrshire, were brought to Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. Dairy population and the manufacturing of dairy products are now concentrated in the North Central States. This region is the nation's Dairyland. In the geographic center of America's

cow country is the Dairy Cattle Congress, a non-profit educational corporation.

The first land acquisition in 1912 was 10 acres. Sixty years later, the grounds cover 86 acres. Following the Silver Jubilee, new construction was financed, and there are now 30 buildings to house the animals and exhibits. The diversification of the show may be illustrated by the figures recorded in 1936: The Holsteins were first in numbers with a total of 158. There were 156 Brown Swiss, 121 Guernseys, 113 Jerseys and 96 Ayrshires. The great cattle show was enhanced by the National Belgian Horse Show, the Midwest Industrial and Machinery Exposition, the American Poultry Congress, the National Corn, Alfalfa and Soybean Shows, the Midwest Garden and Flower Show, the Midwest Rabbit Show and the National Milkmaids' Marathon.

Supporting departments in 1936 were the Women's Department, the Educational Department, the 4-H Club Calf Show, the 4-H Girls' Department and the Saddle Horse Show. The entertainment, according to a 1936 flyer, was provided "not by a gaudy midway, but by America's leading circus talent in daily and evening Hippodrome shows."

The Hippodrome in Waterloo deserves more than passing notice. It takes its name from the Greek word "hippos," meaning horse, and "drom-

os," meaning race-course. Although the Waterloo Hippodrome is now used, in part, as a show ring for horses, it was originally designed as an arena for the parading and judging of dairy cattle. The new Hippodrome of 1936 provided an elliptical show circle a quarter of a mile around. The rows of seats, rising in steep tiers on all sides, accommodated 8,200 people.

The use of this huge building was originally limited to the single month in the year when it was rigged, worked and retired by the Dairy Cattle Congress. Conversion of the Hippodrome into a City Auditorium was first conceived by the Mayor's Citizens' Action Committee. It became an accomplished fact on October 25, 1948, when the Waterloo City Council approved a plan to rent the building from the Cattle Congress for 11 months of the year, and to contract with the Waterloo Auditorium Corporation, a non-profit agency, to manage the Auditorium in behalf of the city.

Improvements made it possible to heat and cool the Auditorium adequately in any weather. The new heating plant was combined with a ventilating system. Sixty-two events were staged in the Auditorium during the first winter of its operation. At the end of the season, after only five months of activity, the Auditorium showed a small profit.

In 1962, the Auditorium was completely remod-

eled and named in honor of R. J. McElroy, a civic leader who had been active in promoting the Auditorium project. A permanent public address system was installed, a large portable stage was constructed, and a seamless concrete floor was poured in the arena. Eight and one-half miles of one-inch pipe were laid under the concrete to circulate the freon for ice in the arena. This refrigeration system permits the Auditorium to be used throughout the winter for recreational skating, as well as for the Ice Follies and professional ice hockey.

A sub-floor on the ice surmounted by a basketball floor makes the Auditorium suitable for intercollegiate basketball games, as well as high school girls' and boys' basketball tournaments at district and sub-state levels. Professional wrestling matches, UNI commencement exercises and performances of the Ringling Brothers-Barnum and Bailey Circus are other activities which are housed in McElroy Auditorium.

When Cattle Congress time rolls around, the concrete floor of the arena is covered with 60 loads of clay to a depth of six to eight inches. The clay is topped with a mixture of sand and green sawdust. Tanbark is no longer used.

During show week, the name of McElroy Auditorium reverts to The Hippodrome—at least in the minds of long-time exhibitors and breeders. The

arena once more becomes a show ring for prize animals. Judging becomes an issue of prime importance. As long ago as 1936, the Judging Divisions were extended to include the Intercollegiate Dairy Cattle Judging Contest, the Interstate Cow-Testers' Judging Contest, the 4-H Club Dairy Cattle Judging Contest and the Future Farmers' Judging Competition.

The rivalry among breeders and the prestige of the awards at the Dairy Cattle Congress have made it necessary to provide adequate barns for the many entries, as well as a show ring for the judging. Income from the annual expositions has been translated into additional acreage and buildings. Modern barns now accommodate 1,000 dairy cattle.

But there have been thorns among the roses. On September 8, 1925, a windstorm destroyed three of the original wooden barns only a short time before the 1925 show was scheduled to begin. The John G. Miller Construction Company rallied all the stone masons, bricklayers and carpenters in town and, within one week, the wreckage was replaced by brick barns which are still in use today.

In 1927, the show was rained out. During the early 30's the Cattle Congress reeled under the blows of the Great Depression. During the 1937 show, the Industrial Exhibition Building was de-

stroyed by fire. It housed the Flower and Garden Exhibit, the Iowa Conservation Commission Display, the broadcasting booth of Radio Station WMT, and a number of new automobiles in the Ford Motor Company Exhibit, all of which represented a considerable loss.

In 1942, the Iowa State Fair and other local fairs were canceled for the duration of World War II. The Dairy Cattle Congress continued in the belief that rural people wanted and needed the education and recreation afforded by such exhibitions. *Wallace's Farmer* of September 19, 1942, commented on the first show after the outbreak of war:

There is undeniably a different atmosphere around the Congress. Frequently, men would be standing at the ring-side talking about their respective help programs instead of viewing the parading animals critically through half-closed eyes as in former years.

What happens when a dairyman can't find suitable help replacements? In Iowa, at least, they are starting to sell their cows. Fortunately for the country's war food program, there usually are plenty of buyers who are fixed to handle a few more.

But some cows go straight to the packing house, on account of the current dressed beef shortage.

In 1943, 1944 and 1945, the Cattle Congress "kept alive" by providing a home for the Iowa State 4-H Dairy Club Show. The "mini-version"

was only a three-day affair scheduled around Labor Day.

Immediately following the war, the Cattle Congress entered the greatest seven-year period in its history. Profits twice as large as its prior best years stimulated another building program. Accolades poured in from the farm press as the cattle and machinery shows increased in size.

The Dairy Shrine Club was organized in 1949. It established its home in a building opposite the entrance to the show grounds, displayed portraits of Pioneers and Guests of Honor, and compiled historical and educational data. The files of the Club have now been moved to Madison, Wisconsin. The annual meeting moves around to various points of interest within America's Dairyland.

The following record of paid admissions to principal fairs in Iowa graphically demonstrates the popular appeal of the Dairy Cattle Congress:

	No.	Days	1941	1946	1947	1948	1949
Iowa State Fair, Des Moines	10	427,363	514,036	506,111	478,668	463,933	
Dairy Cattle Congress, Waterloo	8	156,810	181,220	193,207	186,204	189,210	
North Iowa Fair, Mason City	5	64,377	43,548	52,137	52,671	32,941	
All Iowa Fair, Cedar Rapids	6	86,427	38,000	66,600	58,481	77,542	
Clay County Fair, Spencer	6	151,784	143,457	111,129	125,993	100,581	
Mississippi Valley Fair, Davenport	6	46,571	48,258	55,022	51,814	50,420	

Note: The No. Days is the number of days duration of each fair in 1950.

It is the considered opinion of Maurice Telleen, current Manager of the Waterloo show, that the

National Dairy Cattle Congress is not "National" any more. The Livestock Show, for example, now attracts exhibitors in a cross-country span extending only from Ohio to Colorado. Occasionally, there are entries from Pennsylvania and New York—sometimes California—but, in the main, the show has become regional. Exhibitors in other parts of the United States take their animals to the Cow Palace in San Francisco, the Eastern National and similar expositions.

There are several reasons for this change:

Shipping cattle for long distances by rail has become economically prohibitive and, in these days of curtailed rail service, geographically impossible. Herds do not stay on the circuit for weeks and months, as they once did. Labor and shipping cost are against this practice. Another factor is artificial insemination. In the words of Maury Telleen, 'It has knocked the bull market galley west!'

The Dairy Cattle Congress in Waterloo has become a regional "wind-up" show. It is usually held in late September, after the state fairs are over. Exhibitors look upon the Waterloo show as an opportunity to have their local champions compared with other local champions.

The number of states participating is still surprisingly large. In 1971 the Board of Directors was told that dike construction along the Cedar River was slated to begin in the fall. As a result of

this warning, the decision was made to schedule the annual event in June, instead of late September. "It was a disaster," recalls Manager Telleen. "It was rough for the exhibitors, because farmers had work to do at home and couldn't come to Waterloo. It was one-hundred-degree weather, and neither the show animals nor the people who looked at them were comfortable."

Despite the drawbacks, the Cattle Congress attracted livestock from 16 states and two Canadian provinces. As a footnote to the 1971 show and the ever-present threat of flooding, Maury Telleen adds: "Not a spade full of dirt has been turned yet!" However, work is getting under way this fall.

Part of the reason for the continuing success of the Cattle Congress lies in the fact that the Meat Animal Show, originally held by the Rath Packing Company two weeks after the Dairy Show, is now part of the Cattle Congress. Indeed, the official name of the annual exposition is The National Dairy Cattle Congress and Waterloo Meat Animal Show. This extends the range of entries to include not only dairy cattle, but also beef cattle, swine, sheep and dairy goats. Draft horses, American Saddle Horses, Quarter Horses, Arabians and Shetland Ponies continue to please the crowds and to share attention with the cows.

But the dedication to dairy products is not dead. In 1953, the following story appeared in the *Waterloo Daily Courier*:

A report that a food stand was displaying a sign reading 'We Use Oleo' sent newsmen searching, and it caused a mild explosion in the ranks of officials on the grounds who all seem to be somewhat prejudiced in favor of butter.

From the outset of the Cattle Congress, Waterloo has been blessed by business men who had a personal interest in farming. William Galloway, a prominent farm machinery manufacturer, was a breeder of Holsteins and Ayrshires. W. W. Marsh, another business leader, had a top herd of Guernseys.

Sixty years have not altered the fact that it is good business for Waterloo to serve the farmers. The city is dominated by two industrial giants, the John Deere Tractor Company and the Rath Packing Company, both dependent on the prosperity of agriculture.

As it was in the beginning, the Cattle Congress is governed by a Board of eleven Directors who are leading Waterloo business men and Black Hawk County farmers. These men serve without compensation. They establish show policy and authorize major expenditures for improvements. Current members of the Board are Donald Pullin, President; R. A. Simonsen, Vice President; Eric

Miller, Treasurer; and Bernard W. Ebbing, Hugh Patterson, Joe K. Brummel, Al Schmidt, C. Robert Walker, Leon Olsen, Dick Klingaman and Bill Van Sant, Directors. Jack Canady, Joe Sage and Glenn W. Miller are Advisory Directors. Maurice Telleen, Secretary-Manager, and Richard Byrum, Assistant Manager, are salaried executives.

These men are determined that the Cattle Congress will remain what Bob Bliss said it started out to be: "a great, challenging agricultural exposition, with a big dash of entertainment thrown in for happy times."

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