

The First Congress

The editor of the *Waterloo Courier* was jubilant! "Even if you hate cows, abhor bulls, turn your nose up at milk as a beverage, eat your bread without butter and your pie without cheese and faint away at the sight of buttermilk", he declared, "you will be captivated by the magnificent display of perfect animals at the exhibition." The next day over five thousand people paid admission to see this highly vaunted bovine spectacle at Chautauqua Park.

The first Dairy Cattle Congress opened at Waterloo on October 10, 1910. For weeks the local papers had boomed the event. The responsibility for the success or failure of the show rested largely upon the shoulders of Hugh G. Van Pelt, general manager of the first five Dairy Cattle Congresses. Determined to make the first show so spectacular that Waterloo would "cinch" it for all time, Van Pelt shrewdly appealed to that spirit which had won for Waterloo the distinction of being "the fastest growing town in Iowa". "It is up to the people of Waterloo", he declared, "to make the coming convention and cattle show so much of a success that Des Moines will not have

a look in when the time comes for the selection of a city for the annual event for 1911."

Both local and out-of-town manufacturers were urged to exhibit their products. Waterloo merchants agreed to allow a ten per cent rebate on purchases to be applied to railroad fares. Since the hotels would be unable to take care of the throngs expected to attend the show, Waterloo citizens generously opened their homes to visitors. Breeders and dairymen from far and near were importuned to enter their stock. Not content with letters and advertising, Van Pelt himself went to the Illinois State Fair at Springfield and secured "a special train which brought 13 carloads of the choicest cattle" directly to the Waterloo show.

Waterloo presented a gala appearance on the opening day. Flags and bunting of yellow and white — the colors of the Iowa State Dairy Association — bedecked Fourth Street from the Union Station to Dane Street. The city had donned its "best clothes" to greet the many guests from Iowa and the nation. "We are proud", declared a local editor, "to show the visitors the greatest dairy exposition ever seen in Iowa, and will endeavor beginning with this brilliant event, to hold the title of the dairy center of the west."

The first dairy show was at Chautauqua Park, a "beautifully located" spot in a "very pretty bit

of timber" on the east bank of the Cedar River. The central building of the show was the Coliseum, a large circular building 160 feet in diameter and of steel construction. It was said to be "the biggest building in Iowa without a post". "Big as it is," declared *Wallaces' Farmer*, "it was crowded to its utmost capacity, with some 300 Holsteins, Jerseys, Guernseys and Ayrshires, as well as with a great variety of dairy machinery — cream ripeners, churns, cream separators, litter carriers, stanchions, silos, etc."

The United States government exhibited pure foods and their adulterations, together with samples of tuberculous meats. A doll "brilliantly dressed in green, yellow and red", and wearing the latest style "hobble skirt", served as a magnet for this exhibition. A lesson could be drawn from this pretty maid, for her clothing had been dyed with material used in coloring foodstuffs.

But the exhibits in the Coliseum were not the only attractions in Chautauqua Park in 1910. There were four big machinery tents and many of the larger and heavier implements were displayed in the open. North of the Coliseum stood the judging tent, while to the west a large tent had been erected to hold the meetings of the Iowa State Dairy Association. A merry-go-round, three or four small sideshows, and some lunch

stands completed the picture. The "slight patronage" accorded these side attractions was a "testimony to the character of the crowd". An observer from *Wallaces' Farmer* heard the owner of one of the sideshows "complain that the people were coming to the show to learn something, and not to be amused."

The high quality of the blooded stock was a feature of Waterloo's first Dairy Cattle Congress. It is significant that Boghall Snowdrop 2d and Oldhall Ladysmith 4th, two Ayrshire cows, won first and second place respectively at the first Dairy Cattle Congress and the fifth National Dairy Show. W. W. Marsh's Guernsey bull, Lord Mar, world's champion in 1909, won the grand championship at Waterloo. This specimen of bovine nobility was worth more than \$10,000. Another aristocrat on display had been purchased on the Isle of Jersey by W. R. Spann & Sons of Shelbyville, Kentucky, for \$15,000.

Of the four breeds on exhibition, the Holsteins were the most numerous. There were nearly one hundred of these beautiful "Dutch" cattle. Iowa was represented by five herds but W. W. Moscrip of Saint Paul took the lion's share of the prizes and both grand championships. Individuals from the herds of Frank White & Sons of Hampton, McKay Brothers of Buckingham, H. H.

Schroedermeier and C. A. Nelson of Waverly, and R. B. Young of Buffalo Center won prizes. The number and quality of the Iowa entries revealed the "big-capacited, large-uddered" Holsteins had won a "firm place in the hearts of many northern Iowa dairymen".

The quality of the Jersey exhibit was unexcelled. "There were herds from Wisconsin, New York, Kentucky and Indiana, but unfortunately none from Iowa", lamented *Wallaces' Farmer*. The Guernseys were represented by only two herds, but these were "among the very best in the whole country." W. W. Marsh of Waterloo had entered his cattle against the A. W. and F. E. Fox herd from Waukesha, Wisconsin. Both herds had met a number of times in the show rings and a keen but friendly rivalry existed between the owners. On this occasion W. W. Marsh secured a majority of the prizes including both grand championships.

The Ayrshires were represented by herds from New York and West Virginia. Some of the "most beautiful" animals in the United States were included among those on exhibition. "The Ayrshire has an attraction all her own", wrote an observer in *Wallaces' Farmer*. "There is something about the curve of her horns, the coloring of her body, and the perfect shape of her udder that

makes her very beautiful. This breed is not at all well known in Iowa, but it may be that it has a place here."

Two animals deserve particular mention because of the interest they created. C. A. Nelson had become famous for having milked a cow for six years and purchased a Cadillac touring car with the proceeds. This valuable Holstein was on exhibit in the Coliseum and thousands of post cards of the cow and the car she bought were distributed free so that eye-witnesses might write home about her. Equally notable was W. W. Marsh's "world's famous" Dairymaid of Pinehurst, a Guernsey cow who, as a three-year-old, had produced 14,571 pounds of milk or about thirteen times her weight. During this same period Dairymaid of Pinehurst made an actual butter-fat record of 852 pounds. She topped a list of 107 cows from all over the State which had competed in the Iowa Cow Contest.

The Dairy Cattle Congress adopted a new system of awarding prize money by calling each exhibitor into the Coliseum on the last day and presenting him with a check covering the total of his prizes won. To demonstrate that "A town is known by the cattle it keeps", Waterloo put up over \$2000 in cattle prizes. The butter prizes amounted to \$1000 in cash besides the medals

awarded to the winners. The 174 tubs of butter that were entered in the butter contest were judged by Professor M. Mortensen of Iowa State College.

Several prominent politicians were present at the Dairy Cattle Congress in 1910. Claude R. Porter, the Democratic candidate for Governor, urged a return to the party of Thomas Jefferson. Senator Albert B. Cummins admitted he knew little about dairying and promptly launched into a "masterly address" on the railroad question and Wall Street. Governor B. F. Carroll spoke on "Conservation", pointing to the well-bred dairy cow as an important phase of the movement. Congressman Gilbert N. Haugen talked briefly on the menace of the oleomargarine movement. The dairymen also listened attentively to Garrett Klay, State Representative from Orange City, who had championed a \$10,000 appropriation for the Iowa State Dairy Association and was an interested spectator at the first Dairy Cattle Congress.

Although the meetings of the Iowa State Dairy Association were dwarfed by its Gargantuan offspring, regular sessions were held and many interesting speakers were heard. Indeed, it required ninety solid pages in the *Iowa Year Book of Agriculture* for 1910 to record the proceedings of the convention. President W. B. Barney struck a

controversial spark when he declared: "If the slaughter of the cow not passing the tuberculin test is to be insisted upon as a public health measure, then the public should bear at least a share of the financial loss incurred thereby, and if the dairy cow, why not all other cattle, as tuberculosis is an infectious disease and your cow would be in constant danger of contracting the disease from her brother, the steer." Barney's statement on bovine tuberculosis was sharply criticized by G. H. Sumner of the Iowa State Board of Health.

The attendance at Waterloo's first Dairy Cattle Congress augured well for its future. Good weather prevailed throughout the week and both *Kimball's Dairy Farmer* and *Wallaces' Farmer* estimated the total attendance at approximately 40,000. A total of 5430 paid admissions were chronicled on the banner day but this did not include persons holding season tickets. Unlike most ventures of this kind, a profit of \$348 was realized the first year. Moreover, every exhibitor on the grounds sold all the animals he had on the market at fancy prices. Although C. A. Nelson won only \$36 in prizes, the show was worth \$1000 to him for he disposed of all the Holsteins he had for sale. Many of the dairymen were so well pleased that their pocket books got "limber" and they decided to "fool the old woman" by buy-

ing her the best dress in town. Both retail and wholesale merchants did a "land office" business as a result. The exhibitors on the grounds also enjoyed a rousing trade. One farm machinery manufacturer booked more business during the Dairy Cattle Congress than he normally did in a whole month.

The officers of the Iowa State Dairy Association were unanimous in their opinion that they had just attended the "greatest dairy school" held in Iowa in the thirty-four years of the existence of the association. It was generally conceded that the Middle West had never seen such a "quantity of quality" dairy cattle under one roof. "The hurdy-gurdy, the crimson-faced clairvoyant and the boisterous element have been conspicuous by their absence", observed President Barney. It was earnestly hoped that "the influences originating and being perpetuated" by the Dairy Cattle Congress would "live forever, and add to the inevitable dairy uplift in Iowa."

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