

The Growth of the Congress

A "founding father" once observed that a humble "postage stamp" started the Dairy Cattle Congress. In the quarter century since its inception the show has attracted national and even international attention. The Dairy Cattle Congress in 1934 owns thirty-seven acres of land and rents 20 more on the west bank of the Cedar just north of Waterloo. On these grounds are 19 permanent buildings valued at \$186,750. Twelve are constructed of hollow tile and brick and are relatively fireproof. The plant includes the Hippodrome or livestock judging arena, three horse barns, eight cattle barns, three industrial exhibition halls, the women's and children's building, the poultry and waterfowl building, a herdsman's and groom's building, and a large permanently constructed restaurant. These buildings have a total floor area of 300,000 square feet or more than seven acres.

To an older generation in Waterloo the saying "Where there's a Cow there's a Home" had assumed the sanctity of a proverb. But in 1910 the embryonic cattle show could count neither a cow nor a home among its assets. Indeed, it did not

exist as a corporate entity for it was doubtful whether Waterloo would secure the 1911 meeting of the Iowa State Dairy Association. When the officers met in the spring of 1911 they had practically decided to hold the convention in Des Moines.

To forestall such action a group of Waterloo boosters sent Harry E. Kiester to Des Moines to bid for the convention. "I went down and made that bid single-handed," Kiester related subsequently, "and after a battle with five men from over the state I succeeded in convincing those men that Waterloo was the best place in the state for them to meet." Waterloo business men offered to assume "all responsibility" for both the convention and the show. They proposed to give the association \$1000, furnish convention and show quarters, and entertain the officers. In addition the association would be allowed the revenue from the sale of season tickets and memberships up to 1500. Finally, Waterloo would put up from \$6,000 to \$8,000 in cash prizes for dairy cattle and butter. The prize money was said to be the largest amount ever offered in the United States for a similar event. In return Waterloo asked only for "the co-operation of everyone connected with dairying" in Iowa.

Small wonder that the Iowa State Dairy Asso-

ciation promptly accepted Waterloo's generous offer. At the close of the 1911 exposition, the association adopted resolutions endorsing the "second Iowa dairy cattle show" and heartily recommended that it be "continued in the future".

On August 7, 1913, "The Dairy Cattle Congress" was incorporated as an independent organization "to conduct expositions, fairs, shows, entertainments and displays; to promote dairy and agricultural interests in general, and to carry on such other business" as might be determined by a board of directors consisting of nine stockholders elected annually. The directors elect the officers, including a secretary and manager. Hugh G. Van Pelt served as the first manager, and E. S. Estel has held this post continuously since 1915.

Enthusiasm ran so high during the 1911 meeting that the *Waterloo Courier* could see "no harm in trying" to take the National Dairy Show from Chicago. From Des Moines came a committee including Lafe Young, Jr., E. T. Meredith, and H. C. Wallace, to study the "way" of "The Factory City" of Iowa. The second day of the show was designated as "Waterloo Day", and people were seen "pouring" into Chautauqua Park at sunrise. It was estimated that between 8000 and 10,000 were present on this day alone.

A number of features stand out in the 1911

show. The exhibition of a 6000-pound curd of cheese by the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company attracted thousands. The center of W. B. Barney's pure food display was a picture of Frank Gotch of Humboldt, Iowa, the World's Champion heavyweight wrestler. Gotch was said to have "attained his great strength and wrestling skill after the passage and enforcement of the pure food law in Iowa". Fully fifty thousand dollars worth of machinery was on display — the International Harvester Company having the largest single exhibit. E. R. Shoemaker staged a grand sale of his Jerseys and disposed of 90 head for a total of \$10,944.40, or an average of \$122.16 per head.

It was in 1912 that the Dairy Cattle Congress moved from Chautauqua Park to its present grounds. A ten acre plot was acquired from David Johnson, who insisted that the deed include a provision to allow him to "drive cattle across the acreage except during show week." Two buildings were constructed, and a canvas, stretched from the roof of one building to the roof of the other, provided a "big top" under which the entertainment program was staged.

The entrance gate to the dairy cattle barns during the week of October 14th to 20th, 1912, was described as "the busiest spot in Iowa". Ac-

ording to *Kimball's Dairy Farmer*, about eight hundred "dairy kings and queens" were brought together. The "sensation of the show" was Financial Countess Lad, a Jersey bull from Oklahoma, who "caught the eye of every spectator" and was pronounced one of the "most stylish bulls" that entered any ring that year. Over 190 head were exhibited by Jersey breeders. W. W. Marsh's Guernsey cow, Glencoe's Bopeep, won the grand championship against the best afforded by eleven exhibitors. In the Holstein class, 168 head were shown, and four herds of Ayrshires brought together some of the "finest individuals" exhibited anywhere that season. Brown Swiss were shown for the first time in 1912, two herds being brought from Wisconsin and one from Ohio. The great breeding bull, Reuben, whose sons and daughters were to win grand championships at the big shows of the country, was judged senior and grand champion male. This bull was exhibited by Hull Brothers of Painesville, Ohio, who were still showing their Brown Swiss at the Congress in 1934.

In each succeeding year the size and quality of the dairy exposition seemed to improve. James Wilson, the venerable former Secretary of Agriculture, declared to the dairymen attending the sixth cattle congress in 1915 that in all his long

experience he had never "seen as many fine dairy cattle brought together as you have on these grounds to-day."

The slogan "Everything in the Dairy World" very properly applies to the industrial exhibit, for agricultural and dairy implements have been shown since 1910. Eleven firms displayed their goods at the first show compared with a total of 265 in 1934. The growing popularity of the Dairy Cattle Congress as a medium for advertising and selling has been manifested at each succeeding show. In 1921 "more than \$1,000,000 worth of farm and farm home equipment occupying over 85,000 square feet of exhibit space" was put on display by manufacturers and business houses. At the present time more than ten acres of outdoor space and three huge halls are devoted to such things as farm machinery, dairy equipment and supplies, trucks, modern home conveniences, building materials, food products, and livestock and poultry remedies. Exhibitors give practical demonstrations of the most modern and approved methods in farming and dairying. These are not only interesting and popular with the farmer but also decidedly educational.

A feature of the Dairy Cattle Congress that delights visitors is the Light Harness and Saddle Show which was staged for the first time in 1917.

For this event O. J. Mooers of Columbia, Missouri, brought his entire string of riding and driving horses. Thomas Bass of Mexico, Missouri, brought Belle Beach, the "wizard of the horse world" who was recognized as the "world's most remarkable educated horse". W. H. Hanna of Waterloo showed Black Beauty and Nigger Denmark. Hitches of various kinds, to the latest models of buggies and carriages, were demonstrated. Seven-gaited, five-gaited, and three-gaited riding horses, as well as hurdlers and jumpers, took part in the program each day. Saddle horses from twenty-six stables were present in 1932. Lovers of beautiful horses and professional horse fanciers came from distant points to witness the performance of these spirited animals.

The addition of the National Belgian Horse Show in 1919 has served as a magnet in attracting crowds. The 198 horses entered in 1919 afforded the stiffest sort of competition for prizes. Three new barns, measuring 36 by 300 feet, were added to house these "mammoth equines" whose presence had a "beneficial effect" on gate receipts. A three-year-old stallion from Canada, Paramount Flashwood, won the grand championship in that class. In the mare division, Iowa breeders were strong and the grand championship was won

by Salome, owned by Charles Irvine of Ankeny, Iowa. These massive but graceful animals have held the spotlight since their entrance in the Dairy Cattle Congress. In 1919 there were 37 exhibitors; in 1932 there were 52, all but six of whom were Iowans.

The attendance at the Dairy Cattle Congress in 1920 was estimated to be 72,000. Since that year it has steadily increased: in 1921 a total of 115,000 attended, and in 1922 over 125,000 witnessed the show. The interesting and popular new departments added since 1920 have played no small part in stimulating attendance. The American Poultry Show, started in 1921, has always attracted a loyal following. Every type of fowl from the prosaic American hen to the brilliant-hued Chinese pheasant has been on display. Vying in popularity with the poultry show is the International Waterfowl Exhibit which was added in 1929. The Mid-West Rabbit Show had its first exhibit in 1930.

The Corn Show was made a part of the Dairy Cattle Congress in 1926 and since that time separate divisions have been added for the Soy Bean and Alfalfa Show. The Mid-West Flower and Garden Show is another interesting exhibit that has the endorsement of the Iowa Federation of Garden Clubs and the Iowa Horticultural Soci-

ety. Other features whose importance can not be over-estimated are the College Dairy Cattle Judging Contest, the 4-H Clubs, the Home Equipment and Food Show, and the Women's and Girls' Department and Domestic Demonstration.

The almost universal appeal of the varied departments which comprise the Dairy Cattle Congress has been a potent factor in its success. In 1934 a total of 2743 exhibitors in all departments were recorded at the show. But its main attraction is still to be found in the dairy industry. Based on an average of 688 cows tested, the 1909 "model" cow produced 207 pounds of butter fat. The 1934 "model" cow produced 325 pounds and this average resulted from a test of 25,158 cows. Who would deny the vital influence of such an institution as the Dairy Cattle Congress in bringing about this change?

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