

Dallas Was A Lively Town When Fair-time Came

Folks Came By The Thousands To Enjoy Fun

Writer Recalls Dallas As it Appeared When Fair Flourished Here

Along about this time of year, when fall begins to paint the leaves of the shady elms and oaks and maples, and the stubble of harvested fields turns the countryside to a rich gold in the evening sun, the memories of oldtimers go back a score or more years ago to days when rare excitement visited Dallas.

Phil T. Raub's old hotel, which stood so close to the Lehigh Valley tracks that smoke from the engine funnels used to stir the branches of the two big trees shading the front porch, would be crowded with a boisterous holiday throng.

Farmers' rigs and wagons and horses would fill vacant lots along dusty Main Street. The big general stores of the day, and the lone barbershop and little lunchrooms of the town would be a meeting place of old friends.

It seemed as if the whole region this side of Tunkhannock converged on Dallas.

And so it did, for along about this time of year, in the latter part of September, or early weeks of October, the big annual Dallas Fair attracted farmer neighbors from all over this part of the county, and many from Wyoming County, too.

During the Fair week, business would pick up considerably in Dallas. As a matter of fact, business was pretty good all year around, except when heavy snows kept folks indoors, for the town was the real trading center of this section.

Remember When?

Those were the days when the big general stores were Frantz's and Reese's and Ryman's. Perhaps Ed VanCampen wouldn't care to admit it now, but as far back as thirty years ago, he was Dallas' leading barber. Old timers will remember C. D. Wall, whose boarding house and restaurant shared P. T. Raub's trade.

B. W. Brickel, who was as prominent then as his son, Ralph, is today, was a furniture dealer besides undertaker of the region. Miss Mame Fleming used to serve a hearty lunch in Fleming's Lunch Room, where Dan Richards' store stands today.

George Norton had a drug store on the present site of the Dallas Five and Ten. And about 25 years ago, Gus Kuehn came to town to divide the pharmacy business with Mr. Norton.

Hildebrand and Frantz . . . John Frantz and the late John Hildebrand . . . were merchant millers, located just across the street from where Devens Mill is now.

Instead of service stations and garages, Dallas had livery stables and blacksmiths. Most everybody who lived here in those days remembers B. F. Mott, who started his livery stable over 50 years ago. He kept his horses in the old barn which still stands near Dallas Methodist Church. J. H. LaBar advertised himself as a practical horse shoer, and his blacksmith trade was the biggest in town. The late J. H. Finch was a dealer in horse goods . . . feed and harness.

That was the little town to which thousands came every Fall for a community enterprise which flourished thirty years or more. There are some that claim the Fair really put Dallas on the map.

Perhaps they're right, at that. For weeks prior to the event, anticipation would be high throughout the countryside. And after it was over, the next year's Fair would be a main topic of conversation until it came about.

Fair Association

The Dallas Fair Association was formed back in the middle 1880's.

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Motorcycle Races Thrilled Crowds At Fair

The Dallas Fair, which is only a memory now, had the distinction of introducing motorcycle racing in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

It was Ben Connor of Wilkes-Barre who was responsible. His cousin, Harry, brought the first machine to Wyoming Valley. "Ben," he advised, "if I were you I'd get the agency for this, because it's going to be a popular thing." Ben took his advice.

In October, 1912, in its account of activities at the Fair, The Post reported: "The most spectacular exhibition of speed ever witnessed on the Dallas Fair grounds was the motorcycle racing yesterday afternoon and the excitement of the crowd was held at high tension while the daring riders circled the track. Frank Harter of Dallas rode three miles against time and covered the distance in three minutes and 32 seconds. Only one accident happened and both rider and machine escaped injury."

In its last years, the Dallas Fair was known more widely for its motorcycle and trotting races than for its agricultural exhibits.

Most of the old records have been lost or destroyed, but the few old-timers still alive place the year of the first Fair as 1886.

The first directors put in enough money apiece to purchase the Fair grounds and erect the buildings and race track. Each year the profits of the event, which sometimes were a considerable amount were turned back into improvements to the grounds and other Fair expenses.

Nobody is quite certain who made up the first board of directors. But among those who served in the early years of the Fair were the late Jeff Honeywell and P. T. Raub, Will Conyngham and his brother, John, now deceased, the late J. J. Ryman and John T. Hildebrand.

William K. Goss, after whom part of Dallas Township was named, was active in the Fair Association, as were the late Tom McKeel of Lehman and Penn Kirkendall, Charles D. Gregory, Sr., grandfather of the present Dallas barber, Dwight Wollcott, Zura Hess, Ira Shaeffer and many others.

Sometimes as many as 1,000 exhibitors entered the Fair, bringing in load after load of farm produce, and scores of fine cows and bulls, sheep and horses, and other farm animals. Because they figured that it would be unfair to their less fortunate neighbors, Will and John Conyngham never exhibited.

One of the biggest horse racers was the late William Bulford, whose horses were driven to victory year after year by Marvin Riley, one of the best horse trainers and racers of his day.

The crowds visiting the Fair, which was a five-day affair, lasting from Tuesday through Saturday night, grew steadily each year. Often, daily crowds reached to nearly 10,000.

Its Closing Years

In its closing years, just before the World War, the Dallas Fair enjoyed its greatest prosperity. One of the last crowds recorded, came to well over 9,000 persons.

The final Dallas Fair was held in 1918. That year a handful of the directors bought out the rest of the men and sold the grounds to a pair of realtors at a small profit. It

THANKS!

I appreciate deeply the fine support of my friends Tuesday in nominating me for council in Dallas Borough. I shall do my best always to fulfill their trust.

JACK ROBERTS

would be hard to determine exactly what that deal cost Dallas in prestige and business over the last 20 years. But it has been a considerable loss to the town, and an even greater one to the countryside.

John Frantz was secretary of the last board of directors, which included the late W. B. Robinson, William Bulford, D. P. Honeywell, E. G. Stevens and John Conyngham. Mr. Frantz and Will Conyngham are about the only surviving members of that board.

A Desolate Tract

Over in Dallas Township, not far east of the Goss Manor development, is a more or less desolate tract, overgrown in some parts, sparsely built in others . . . all that remains of the old Fair grounds, and the unsuccessful building development that brought a grand institution to its end.

The half mile race track, which used to be the best in the county, has disappeared. Those who attended the Fair remember the big harness and trotting races, high-lights of the Fair, and the parades of prize-winning horses and cattle. The old grandstand, which was capable of seating 500 people, and used to hold twice that many, has been torn down. And nothing remains of the big exhibit building—200 feet long and 50 feet wide, it was—and the horse and cattle barns, and that old farmhouse which stood on the spacious grounds.

A broom factory replaced the exhibit building. But it seems that nobody was interested in making brooms, and the structure stood idle until it was razed by fire about ten years ago. The realtors who took over the Fair grounds had grandiose ideas. They built a concrete road to the Fair grounds, laid the 35-acre plot out into neat building lots. Few people bought. Not many years later the salesmen gave up, discouraged.

But the Fair has never come back.



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Bloomsburg Fair Opens Sept. 25

50,000 Boys And Girls Invited To Exposition

Bloomsburg, Sept. 14.—More than 50,000 Central Pennsylvania school children will be guests of the Fair Association during the Bloomsburg Fair, held day and night the last week of September, opening Monday, September 25.

The heads of more than 100 school systems in Luzerne, Lackawanna, Schuylkill, Northumberland, Sullivan, Snyder, Union, Center, Columbia and Montour counties have received letters of invitation.

Acceptances already show that more children see the Fair, with many educators commenting on the splendid educational value of the exhibits.

The events in which there are school boy and school girl participants, and there promise to be more than 400, will be staged on Tuesday, September 26. Judging events will last through much of the day. Columbia and Montour county school children are guests of the Fair on Tuesday.

Both from the standpoint of educational exhibits and entertainment features the Bloomsburg Fair, which broke records at every hand last year, is setting a higher standard for the exhibition now less than a month away. There will be horse racing and vaudeville from Tuesday through Friday; automobile races on Saturday, September 30, and a spectacular night show, "World's Fair Revue," each evening during the week.

Large Enrollment As Misericordia Opens

The largest freshman class in the history of College Misericordia was received when students reported for registration on Wednesday. The freshmen will participate in a four-day program of orientation exercises which will include an introduction to the faculty, analysis of the courses and an outline of college life.

Examinations and placement tests for new students will be held during the last half of this week. Upper classmen will register on Monday and the college will open on Friday, September 22, with a mass of the Holy Ghost, at which all students will be present.

325 Pupils Enrolled In Dallas Schools

Three hundred twenty-five pupils are enrolled in Dallas Borough Schools, Supervising Principal T. A. William announced this week. There are 170 pupils in the six-year Junior-Senior high school and 155 in the elementary grades.

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FIVE DALLAS YOUTHS EARN WINGS AT ILLINOIS AIRPORT

Five young men from Dallas are attending the U. S. Air Corps Technical School at Chanute Field, Rantoul, Ill. They are Leon Austin, Paul Kepner, James Oberst, Chester Austin and Wayne Harvey.

James Oberst, son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Oberst, and Chester Austin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon J. Austin, are studying aircraft radio mechanics and operation with the 21st Reconnaissance Squadron. Leon Austin, a brother of Chester, is pursuing a course of training in aircraft airplane and engine mechanics in the 46th School Squadron. Paul Kepner, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Kepner, is studying aircraft radio mechanics with the 20th Bombardment Squadron. Wayne Harvey, 49th Bombardment Squadron, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Harvey, is receiving a course in aircraft radio mechanics and operation.

Kepner, Oberst, Chester Austin and Harvey went to Rantoul Field from Langley Field and Leon Austin was transferred there from Randolph Field, Tex.

First Lime Arrives For Pasture Treatment

Marking what the Luzerne County Agricultural Conservation Committee declares is the beginning of a most important development in agriculture here, the first carload of lime to be used for pasture treatment under the 1939 farm program was unloaded in the county on September 8.

This is the first shipment to be distributed here under the plan to encourage pasture treatment in the county by supplying lime to farmers who wish to use these materials on pasture land now and pay for them later out of money they earn by carrying out these pasture improvement practices under the farm program.

The committee urged all farmers who are interested in searching lime and super-phosphate for pasture treatment to call at the County Agricultural Extension C Agricultural Conservation office located at Room 22, Town Hall Building.

Allentown Fair Opens On September 19

New and original in its production, the World's Fair Revue, probably the largest outdoor stage presentation ever to go on tour, will provide patrons of the Great Allentown Fair when the appear on the nights of September 19-20-21-22-23 with the ultimate in entertainment which couldn't be surpassed, anywhere else in the country, including Broadway, where the dancing and musical numbers of this stellar show were conceived. Its catchy name and many of its fine routines were derived from the giant exhibitions being staged in New York and San Francisco.

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Body Is Taken From Lake After A Week's Search

A week-long search for the body of Millard "Slim" Haeefe, 34, 315 East Northampton Street, who drowned September 2, ended on Saturday in 70 feet of water near Warden Place. Charles Sprake, Alderson, laid hold of the body with grappling hooks. A professional diver who had waded through a four-foot layer of mud in the search, had given up the search several days earlier and removed his equipment.

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