

History of the Scioto County Fair

The first county fair was held in 1828 by the Agricultural and Horticultural Society. There were only two fairs recorded, which were held in the falls of 1828 & 1829, and then nothing else was heard of the society or the fairs.

In 1839, the Scioto County Agricultural Society was formed. In October of that year the Portsmouth Jockey Club held races, but it is not known if that included a fair. The society continued to exist and there were a number of early fairs.

Some the early fairs prior to 1850 were held in Lawson's Grove at the head of Jackson Street.

Many political meetings were also held there. Ohio politician, Clement Vallandigham, addressed the citizens when running for State Office.

In the 1860s, the fairgrounds were located where the Children's Home was built, which is now Mound Park. It was used as an "art hall". The county fairs were held here for many years.

In the Portsmouth Times, the Scioto County Agricultural & Mechanical Society advertises the fair in 1858, but the society is not mentioned holding a county fair again until 1870. The earlier fair was the first week of October while the 1870-1873 fairs were held in mid to late September.

At one time the fairs were held at the former Camp Morrow (or Camp Sill) location. The land extended from Offnere east to Young Street and from 10th to Robinson Avenue. The land was covered with beautiful giant oak trees which added to the country atmosphere for a fair. It was also known as the Hutchins-Glidden grove.

During the fair of 1887, the “two-mile” saloon law was enforced. This local law was to keep liquor from the fairgrounds. The “two miles” was walking distance to the fair (Camp Sill).

The local temperance organization tried to get the mayor to issue a proclamation to close all saloons.

He declined, but a committee was formed to ensure the “two-mile” law would be enforced.

Circus companies and Civil War reunions also utilized the area.

The next place the county fair was held was long known as the Charles Chick farm (New Boston).

The farm was later purchased by Levi York to rebuild his mill on this site after the fire that destroyed Burgess Mill. (formerly located on 3rd St.)

At one time, a race track occupied the Damarin farm, originally owned by Dr. Offnere, now the site of the N & W Railway terminals.

In 1900, a fair was held at Dugan’s Grove which was located near the mouth of Millers Run. It is near to the present day fairgrounds. The forested grove was across from the Dugan country home and was a popular Sunday school picnic area. The fair held was known as the “Scioto Valley Fair”.

In the northeast corner of Rarden Township is the community of Mt. Joy. The first fair at this location was in 1851.

A fair was held here for many years and was a great success. This was in large part because of the community. The fair boasted the

best- of-the-best fruits, vegetables, farm animals, quilts, exhibits and home cooking. There was also an art hall.

Music filled the air, but “not highfalutin” as they noted in the newspaper. People traveled from distances in wagon, on horseback and on foot. Many came from Pike and Adams County.

This fair coincided with the Lucasville fair for many years until their merger in 1911.