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The Banker-Farmer

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News Bulletin

A Little Journal of Agricultural
Information for the Farmer

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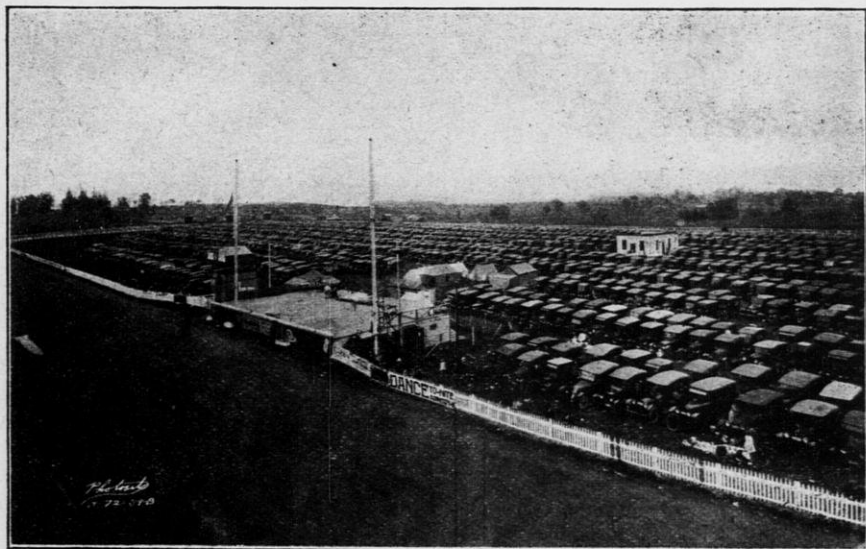
BULLETIN No. 45

JUNE, 1924

"THE VALUE OF COUNTY FAIRS!"

By PROF. A. W. HOPKINS

College of Agriculture, U. of W., Madison



BEAVER DAM FAIR GROUNDS

"THE VALUE OF COUNTY FAIRS!"

By PROF. A. W. HOPKINS

College of Agriculture, U. of W., Madison

"They are all alike. If you have seen one of them you have seen all of them."

Every one of us has made or heard that remark after attending a county fair. And we have been just as eager to attend the next one. The demonstrations of better methods, the displays of manufactured articles, the exhibits of farm products and even the hawkers have interested us.

We have helped to make up the million and a half interested people who annually attend our fairs and allied shows in Wisconsin alone.

RECORD OF A YEAR'S PROGRESS

Since the earliest days of the fairs we have gone in throngs again and again to the county fair grounds where in one great collection we anticipate will be gathered the best that man has accomplished in the various phases of agriculture during the past year.

Not even the most enthusiastic would contend that the results of these annual expositions, when properly conducted, are directly or immediately apparent, rather that the influence is exerted over long periods of time. In fact it would be impossible to estimate the far reaching influence of these annual county expositions upon Wisconsin's agricultural practices.

Any one at all familiar with the history of these institutions, knows that as positive results of such displays and competitions, breeds of livestock have been improved, farm machinery developed, cropping systems bettered, production simplified, and farm marketing made more efficient.

FURNISH RECREATION AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY WELFARE

Nor are the results confined to that which is material; there is, or may be, a distinct social or spiritual gain.

Thanks to the good judgment of fair managers the indecent and immoral features are becoming more and more subordinated. There is, of course, a place for clean fun making in the annual county get-together. We can all join whole-heartedly with the kiddies while they enjoy themselves with a ride on the ferris wheel or merry-go-round, imagining ourselves a few years younger.

However, many of the most progressive fairs have found it possible to satisfy the demand for relaxation and amusement through home talent pageants and other features of entertainment. The history of one community was depicted in pageantry from the early settlement up to the present time. In other instances home talent has been used in plays, circuses, vaudeville, and hippodrome acts. Rest tents, with pleasing music furnished by boys' bands, have also proven successful in making certain fairs more enjoyable not only to the women and children but to the men as well.

Thus can the county fair be made an annual vacation time or home-coming when and where the fair-goers have a chance to meet congenially their neighbors and other friends, and talk over affairs of mutual interest.

COUNTY FAIRS A STIMULUS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Our county fairs are contributing to the betterment of American agriculture by stimulating boys and girls in their project and club work. We are in no doubt as to the tremendous value of training our boys and girls so that they will be more prepared to take up their future duties along more progressive and scientific lines. Not only do they reap the benefits of their own work at the fair but through their work the older folks often gain stimulus helpful in their every-day practices.

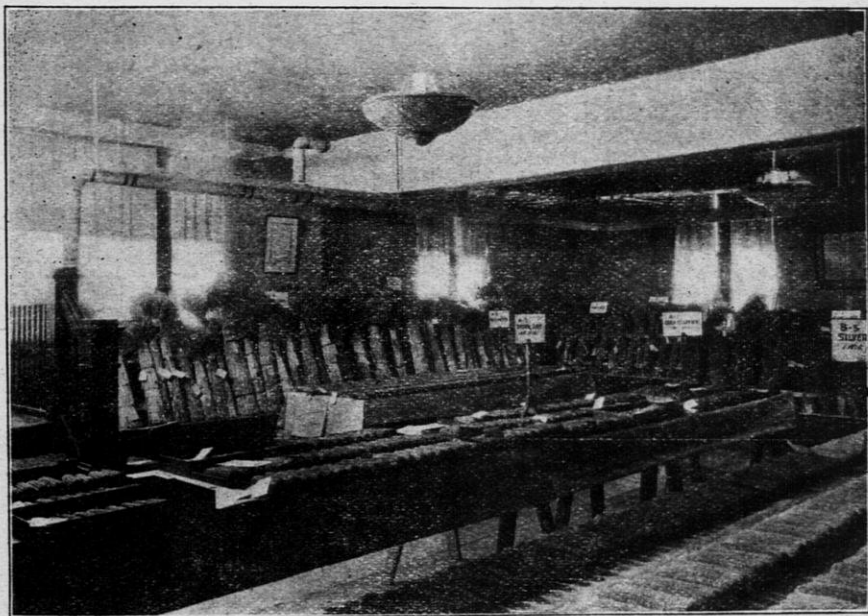
The home economics departments frequently give fair-goers, through demonstrations, an idea of what is being taught in the home making line at the public schools.

Similarly interesting demonstrations are being given by the boys and girls of the different clubs and schools. By means of a potato demonstration boys may get and give information on the proper seed selection, proper treatment before, at the time of, and after planting, and in addition facts upon the grading, sacking, and shipping. At many of the county fairs these bands of youngsters exhibit the products of their own effort and skill, competing against each other for recognition of their accomplishments. The training and inspiration incident to these contests have much to do with training the young people of today to be the leaders of tomorrow.

AFFECTS LIVESTOCK IMPROVEMENT

Almost unbelievable strides have been made in livestock production in recent years, no small part of which is due to the influence of the county and other fairs. As the county fair is close to the great mass of farmers it may surpass the larger fairs in direct influence. The livestock show gives the public a chance to become acquainted with the various breeds, and it provides opportunity for the sale and dissemination of pure-bred livestock. It gives the farmer a chance to study the good and bad points of the different animals and by comparison make his choice.

The show-ring competition provides one of the greatest educational features of the modern county fair, not only to the participants but to the onlookers as well. In the show-ring is given a stimulus for the competitors to excel in the production of better livestock. As far as the fitting of animals is concerned, it impresses the necessity of proper care and management previous to showing. The type demanded is also brought out in the show-ring of the county fair through public judging and the explanations given by the judges for their placings. The competitors and onlookers, as



FARM CROPS ON DISPLAY

well, are educated as to what is the best type of the various classes and breeds of livestock. This educational judging which is prevalent at most of our fairs is of great value to the owners of inferior animals.

DEMONSTRATE WOOL GRADING

Many demonstrations and exhibits are now being given at the county fair for the benefit of those interested in the livestock industry. One which has been given and would prove of great value to the farmers of Wisconsin is a wool demonstration. The tying of the fleece is shown, the grading of the wool, and the steps in the manufacture from the wool to the finished fabric is sometimes demonstrated.

The seed grain growers also benefit by means of the demonstrations presented at these county wide educational institutions. Through them the attention of the farmers is directed to the requirements of good grain. Incidentally ways of improving it and keeping it free from disease and other deteriorating agencies, are more fully appreciated.

GIVES AID TO THE HOUSEWIFE

The housewife should not be, and has not been, left out of the well conducted fair. She, too, has benefitted to an immeasurable degree from these institutions. One great department of the fair devoted to the cause of homemaking has stood along side of other educational agencies in helping her to become more efficient in her various duties. At many of the fairs of today the make-up of a balanced meal and the best methods of preparing it are demonstrated to interested and appreciative professions of home-makers, present and prospective.

In the clothing exhibits are shown desirable types of clothing to be worn, the combinations of color which are best and the easier methods of making clothes in the home. Through the "Health and Better Baby Shows" visiting mothers have been aided greatly in the better rearing of their children. Many a mother can trace the beginnings of better nutrition for her family to aids given her at these public demonstrations.

WILL YOU ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE?

Are we realizing results from our county fair proportionate with the investment of time and money? What have we now invested in the county fair plants of Wisconsin? What value do we place on the results of these demonstrations and exhibitions? These are some of the questions which we have a right to ask ourselves.

In dollars and cents here is a scant picture; the State of Wisconsin paid out to the 84 district and county fairs in this state in 1922 \$281,000. State aid is given to the extent of 80% of the premiums offered in the strictly agricultural classes. The premiums offered for these agricultural exhibits amount to \$1,405,000.00. Just vision this great fund of money given away by the county and state for work looking toward the betterment of agriculture. One might find himself wondering if this unbelievable amount of money could not be used to better advantage in some other way. Not only was this amount used in this one year for the purpose of promoting these developments but it is going on year after year. Think for yourself, if you can imagine such an enormous sum, what this would amount to over a period of twenty-five years. Nor is this the only expenditure rightfully chargeable to the fair.

DOES IT PAY?

The value of the county fair plants in this state is approximated at over \$1,557,000.00. That represents the buildings, grounds, and all of the conveniences on these grounds, and forms another great item in the county fair. All of this capital is tied up in an institution that is only used four days to a week in the year. We may well ask ourselves, does it pay?

Right here is where we would feel the responsibility resting upon our shoulders. Are we doing our share to make this a profitable investment for our county? Do we have that county consciousness or the self-respect and pride that we should have in our home county? If we have not then this is a great challenge to "come out of the ether" and make our county fair a paying investment and an inspiration to ourselves and to our neighbors.

NEWS ITEMS

There are many individual bankers who are taking a splendid interest in their rural communities, and who are cooperating with the county agent in carrying out his program. We are endeavoring very materially to enlarge upon this work and to encourage County Bankers' Associations to appoint an agricultural committee and cooperate with the county agent and his advisory committee in a manner similar to what some of the individual bankers are now doing.

Several County Bankers' Associations in the state have held meetings, at which time our agricultural plans were presented by the county agent and a representative from the state association. Eau Claire, Clark and Vernon counties have appointed agricultural committees, while Grant and Green Lake counties have made tentative plans for the presentation of the agricultural program at their next regular County Bankers' Association meetings. Although Crawford and Langlade counties have just organized their County Bankers' Associations, and in spite of the fact that they have no county agricultural agents, they have appointed agricultural committees to cooperate with the farmers wherever their cooperation is desired.