



The Dutchess County Fair

ALTHOUGH the last decade has been marked by the wholesale destruction of old landmarks and old customs, it has not made the massacre entirely complete. There is at least one fête indulged in by ancient man that still commands considerable interest. It is the county fair.

This spectacle has long held a prominent place in the hearts of the people of Dutchess County and the fame of their annual fair at Rhinebeck in the fall is not confined to their own countryside. It enjoys a reputation that is State wide.

Just when this famous old custom first became the annual event that it is to-day, is not quite certain. The Dutchess County Agricultural Society, under whose auspices the fair is held, is known to have existed as early as 1807. The fair undoubtedly served as its annual meeting.

The birth of the present society appears to date back to October, 1841, when an organization meeting was held at Emighs Hotel, Washington Hollow. The probability is that the new group was merely a re-organization of the old. For a time, the fairs were held at Washington Hollow and Poughkeepsie, those at the latter city being staged on the grounds at the corner of Mill and Catharine Streets on which the Dutch Church now stands.

The society and consequently the fair has always been favored with splendid leadership. The roster of its presidents is also the roster of the foremost

citizens of Dutchess County. Henry Staats, of Red Hook, as first president after the re-organization, set the high standard of qualifications that was adhered to so strictly in subsequent choices. Edward Gridley, of Amenia, president about 1880, was the first to enforce prohibition on the grounds with an edict banning all intoxicants.

No fair, of course, is a success, unless that banished traveller of the road, the horse, plays a prominent part in the proceedings. In the old days, especially, he played a leading role.

The era of the trotters which began in the fifties and continued in intense popularity through the eighties was reflected in the fairs of that time. Many of the prominent residents of the country were breeding trotting colts and when the "fair" days came, the competition was keen and spirited. Wellington M. Velie of Pleasant Valley was an unforgettable figure at the old Washington Hollow Fairs, as he was an annual judge of either the horses themselves or the races. Mr. Velie's Flora Temple, which he developed in Dutchess County was considered in her day to be "queen of the turf."

The real event of the fair during this time was the race held the last day between the trotting bred stallions. The purse was not large but the title of winner meant many service fees during the coming year. Accordingly the tension was high.

The spirit of competition pervaded the spectators also and many impromptu races were staged on the road from the grounds. It was considered to be unwritten law that on the homeward journey, no one was to pass you. As a natural consequence wrecks were frequent, where three horses tried to race side by side on a roadway built to accommodate one.

But the horse was not the only attraction at these early Washington Hollow Fairs. Stock of all kinds came in for its share of competition. Premiums were offered for the best cultivated farm in Dutchess County as well as for the best string of eight yoke of working oxen.

The year 1873 saw a notable exhibition of fat cattle by George Ayrault. The steer "Champion" weighing two tons and the heifer "Queen" weighing over a ton and a half, carried off the honors.

Daniel B. Height a resident of the town of Washington was the leading breeder and exhibitor of blooded stock at the county fair. His shorthorn cattle captured many premiums at the State fair as well as at the county gathering. There are cattle on the old farm to-day that are descendants of the cattle bred by Mr. Height more than fifty years ago. His horses and sheep were almost equally famous. Many other breeders of note exhibited Devon cattle, a breed that is no longer seen in Dutchess County.

In 1882, the bicycle, then beginning in earnest to take the country by storm, entered the

fair arena. The race that year was marked by a thrilling upset in the calculations of the spectators. James H. Ostrander, at that time considered to be the best rider in the county, was the favorite. J. Hunting Bostwick of Pine Plains and George C. Ham of Washington Hollow were the other contestants. Bostwick was a newcomer to the wheel having been pedaling for less than a year.

The novel race drew great crowds and the grandstand and hill overlooking the track were crowded with spectators. Ostrander gained the lead and kept it throughout the early laps and the winner seemed to be a foregone conclusion. But Bostwick apparently had visions of a victory, which the spectators knew nothing of. Coming down the home stretch, he spurred and shot ahead of Ostrander to win the race.

The fair continues to hold its own although the expenses of operation mount to a larger total each season. The horse still occupies a prominent position inside the fair-gates but without he is rapidly becoming a memory of yesterday. The regal Ford has taken over the burden he bore so long and the parking space has supplanted the hitching post.

HE SAID WHAT HE WAS TOLD

"Can't keep the visitors from coming up," said the office boy dejectedly to the editor. "When I say you're out they don't believe me. They say they must see you."

"Well," said the editor, "just tell them that's what they all say. I don't care if you 'check' them, but I must have quietness."

That afternoon there called at the office a lady. She wanted to see the editor, and the boy assured her that it was impossible.

"But I must see him," she protested, "I'm his wife."

"That's what they all say," replied the boy.

And now a new boy is wanted there.

☆ ☆ ☆

Mrs. Van Swamp: William, dear, as you have another chill coming on, will you kindly hold the baby's rattle in your hand? It amuses the sweet precious so much!

☆ ☆ ☆

When she eyed me askance,
Was she offended? No!
She did not mean it so,
When she eyed me askance,
For she's cross-eyed, you know.

☆ ☆ ☆

"There's a strange man at the door, sir," announced the new servant from Boston.

"What does he want?" asked the master of the house, impatiently.

"Begging your pardon, sir," replied the servant, a shade of disapproval manifest in his voice, "he wants a bath, but what he is asking for is something to eat."

The Gazette-Advertiser

CIRCULATION 3000

The Rhinebeck Gazette
Established 1846

Covering Northern Dutchess

Red Hook Advertiser
Established 1923

CXXVIII No. 16

Rhinebeck, New York 12572

DUTCHESS COUNTY FAIR Aug. 24-29

Thursday, August 12, 1971

Single copy Twenty Cents

Kapricorn Kids Groom 4-H Goats



RHINEBECK- Above, showing the goats they will enter in the Fair are, left to right, Don Rider with Delili, Elaine Rider with Missy, Ginnie and Dennis McComb with Bambi. Below Mrs. VanVoorhis and Elaine hold a goat while Mr. VanVoorhis trims his legs and hooves. The VanVoorhis' are advisors to the 4-H goat club.

For New RCS Hi Students

RHINEBECK- Students new to the Rhinebeck Central School system will be attending grades 7-12 in September 1971 should contact the Guidance Office located in the central building on North Park Road during the week of August 23rd for information and scheduling. Such students should bring their transfer cards and report cards for the previous school year, proof of age and any tentative schedule for the current year.



Looking north on Linden Avenue, County road workers are shown getting ready to install the second footing on the north side of the Sawkill. When completed the wider bridge will include a foot path. On the left side of the road in the distance (light area) appears the leveled roadside which used to be a snow-catching bank.

County Widens Linden Ave. Bridge

RHINEBECK- The Linden Avenue bridge is in the process of being widened by the County Department of Public Works. A year ago County Representative Madison Sippierley carried a request for improvements of Linden Avenue to the County department after a meeting of the Town, Village and School Boards and private citizens. At that time the road was deemed unsafe for pedestrians, bicyclists, cars and school busses. New footings are being installed now at the bridge site, according to Mr. Netter, road superintendent with the Public Works department. Next the superstructure will be erected, then a private contractor will install prestressed steel beams and the County will finish the roadbed and railing. Mr. Netter stated that the road will not be closed but that there was a possibility that traffic flow will be limited across the bridge at certain times during construction. The road has been improved at two other points this summer. North of the bridge on the west side, a bank has been lowered so that snow will blow across the road, rather than accumulate in the road. Trees were removed and poles moved in conjunction with Central Hudson, Mr. Netter stated. The ground

FAIR DAYS

SEE FAIR SECTION: PAGES 9, 10, 11.

Colonial delegates assembled in Philadelphia signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Thirty years later the Dutchess County Agricultural Society—which stages your annual Fair—was in existence.

The organization may be more than 165 years old, but there is documentary proof that Chancellor Livingston in an 1806 treatise referred to his membership in the Dutchess Society. Livingston, an area landowner, was a New York State signer of the freedom declaration and in 1789 swore in the republic's first president, George Washington.

All of which emphasizes how deep in history are the roots of the Dutchess County Agricultural Society.

In 1819, the first Dutchess County Fair of record—very likely there had been earlier ones—was conducted at Washington Hollow, just west of today's Farm and Home Center.

Subsequent Fairs—with many cancellations due to war, epidemics and hard times—were held there, at Rhinebeck and at Poughkeepsie's Old Driving Park. There had been no Fair in 1916 nor in 1918 because of severe financial problems and the Society's Board of Directors was in danger of losing its charter.

A number of dedicated board members were determined to prevent that unhappy fate. They reorganized the directorate and moved the 1919 Fair to Rhinebeck with that historic village's Springbrook Park as the permanent stage.

There were good years and lean years ahead until the end of World War II created a renewed zest for fun and travel. The Fairs of 1945 and 1946 were so successful that all debts were paid off and a tidy sum was tucked away in a savings account. The Fair continued to prosper.

In 1950 the society was reincorporated, with a membership of 50 and a board of 15, later increased to 16 directors. That year, Springbrook Park was purchased and renamed the Fairgrounds. In 1965, the Fairgrounds were expanded to the present 87.5 acres with the purchase of 8.5 acres of adjoining land.

The Dutchess County Fair has progressed from a few tents in a pasture to a complex of permanent buildings—the grounds improved with surfaced roadways and beautified by the addition of trees and shrubbery. There has been an expansion of parking and picnic areas.

A highlight of the directors' progressive program occurred in 1968 when two large all-metal exhibit buildings were dedicated by New York State Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets Don J. Wickham.

The two out-moded structures replaced by the metal ones were split into sections, with sections converted into a permanent home for the Poultry Show; a stage for the Dance Tent's Talent Search performances; the first five buildings of a developing Old American Village for displaying farm and home antiques; and for a tool shed.

The major construction this year has been that of a permanent, 60-180-foot sheep barn and show ring.

The reward lies in the public's response to the energy expended by the Board of Directors, department superintendents, exhibitors, competitors and a host of others. In 1970, there was an all-time attendance record of 169,043 men, women and children.

Clinton G.O.P. Designees

CLINTON- The Town of Clinton Republican Committee recently held a Caucus at the Town Hall in Schultsville for the purpose of nominating candidates for Town Offices. The Committee consists of Mrs. Donald Cookingham, Mrs. Evelyn Wesley, Francis Van Auken and Chairman Edward Grey.

Over 100 enrolled Republicans turned out for the meeting at which the following were nominated to run for office in the general election in November. Town Supervisor- Len Kinney, Town Clerk- Kelsey Wirehouse, Town Justice- William Tompkins, Superintendent of Highways- Ford Harper, Tax collector

Joyce Curtin. All of those nominated, presently hold those offices and must face Democratic candidates. William Tator was nominated for Assessor (Short Term), an office presently held by Ed Nelson and Mrs. Bertha Recchia was nominated for Assessor (Long Term) presently held by Ernest Klopping. There was a contest for the office of Town Councilman presently held by Don Bartles who is retiring at the end of his term. After nominations, a written ballot was taken and Ann D'Attore won out over Howard Adriance with a vote of 70 to 29. Mrs. D'Attore is the first woman to run for the office of Town Councilman in Clinton in recent years.

Charles Talleur of the County Board of Representatives reminded all present that a Primary will be held at the Schultsville Town Hall on September 14th for the purpose of designating three candidates for the Board of Representatives from Clinton-Hyde Park. Those seeking the three positions are Charles Talleur, Clayton Clearwater, Bill Reynolds and Herbert Gindele. Mr. Talleur urged all residents of Clinton to make their choice known by turning out for the primary.

DATES TO NOTE

RHINEBECK- The regular Board of Education meeting has been postponed from Aug. 23 to Aug. 30.

RED HOOK- Red Hook Town Board special meeting on Vanalba on Monday, Aug. 23 at 8 p.m. at the Grange Hall, Prince St.

KINGSTON- Public hearing by the Public Service Commission on water rates of Annandale Water Works and College Park Water Company, on Thursday, Aug. 26 at 10 a.m.

The hearing is to be held at the Ulster County Office Building. (However, a request has been made to the PSC to change the location to Red Hook.)

RED HOOK- Republican party caucus at the VFW hall on Wednesday Aug. 25 at 8 p.m.

RHINEBECK- The Village Board will open bids on the installation of 115 linear feet of pipe on Friday, Aug. 20 at 5 p.m.

Vanalba Decision Aug. 23

RED HOOK- A decision for or against the development of Vanalba Homes Inc. on 80 acres at the corner of Routes 9G and Old 199 will be announced by the Red Hook Town Board on August 23. The Board will hold a public meeting on that night at 8 p.m. in the Grange Hall on Prince Street, Supervisor Warren Simmons announced.

The Town Board holds the power to rezone the area to allow for the Vanalba planned development district, or to reject the proposal. The Red Hook Planning Board recommended that the plan, which includes 361 units of housing and could accommodate about 1155 persons, be accepted.

On the other hand the County Planning Board twice recommended

against it on the basis of its being outside the Sawkill Drainage Basin, the reasonable place for public sewers.

Also, at a public hearing on June 23 the weight of opinion was against the proposed community. Cited were possible overcrowding of schools, inadequate sewer facilities, a low water table and potential traffic hazards.

Since then petitions have been presented to the Town Board against the \$5 million project, which would include shopping and recreation facilities for the residents.

The Board previously postponed a decision awaiting all the facts.

Mr. Simmons stated that the facts upon which the Board's decision is based will be explained at the public meeting.

Treatment Plant Nov. 1

TIVOLI- Mayor Mortimer Appel announced that Tivoli's long awaited secondary sewage treatment plant will be in operation by November 15.

Last Friday brush clearing was started in the plant area to make way for the prefabricated plant, which will be brought in and assembled by Lafko Brothers

contractors. Delivery is expected about October 1 and assembling the plant should take about a month, the mayor said.

The new plant will cost \$238,600 and is being federally and state aided. The aid was snarled in red tape, which delayed construction for several years.

Fix Broken Water Line

RED HOOK- On Monday, August 16 Village workers in the line of duty inadvertently broke a water meter at a house on North Broadway. Hoping to turn the water off quickly they dug down to the water main and as luck would have it, that too broke.

Then with the help of a back hoe they found the

shutoff valve. Fortunately, only one family was inconvenienced that night by having its water turned off and the next day the damage was repaired.

Bike Warning

RED HOOK- Village police issued a strict warning against riding unlighted bicycles on streets after dark.

Patrolman Rexford Maine said it was illegal for a bicycle to be on the road after dark without a front light and rear reflector that can be seen for at least 500 feet. Bikes also must have horns, he said.

Big Baby

RHINEBECK- "Asian Annie" a 1000 pound baby elephant will appear at the Wildlife Exhibit at the Dutchess County Fair, it was announced by the Fair staff.

AFSer Kay Davidson Here

RHINEBECK- Kay Davidson, American Field Service student, second from left, is getting acquainted with her American family. Kay recently arrived from her home city, Auckland, New Zealand. Her host family for the next school year includes Linda Pratt, far left, young

Kerri Pratt seated on Mrs. Pratt's lap and pet dog Samantha on Mr. Pratt's lap. Kay will be a student at Rhinebeck Central School and is looking forward to studying her favorite subjects—history and English.

Fish Office On Vacation

HUDSON- The Office of Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. located at 509 Warren St. Hudson, N.Y. will be closed for vacation beginning August 23rd until September 7th. The Kingston District Office will assist those who may have a problem on the federal level during this period of time.

In the event of an emergency residents of this area may call or write directly to either the Washington Office at the House Office Building Washington D.C. 20515 or call AC 202-225-5441; or the Kingston District Office, 292 Fair Street Kingston, phone AC 914-331-4466.

CATV Deferred

RHINEBECK- The Town Zoning Board of Appeals deferred action on the Kingston Cablevision request for a special permit to construct a CATV installation on Tator Hill Rd. The request, a long time issue, was opposed by the more than 30 persons attending, including 8 of the 10 homeowners in the area.

Don Rubsha, acting as chairman in the absence of Arthur Carl, presided over the well run meeting and acknowledged a "lack of enthusiasm" for the project.

The board, after a brief public hearing, approved the undersized lot variance request by Parker Bloomfield.

COMING EVENTS

- July-Aug. - Saturday evenings, Homemade Ice cream Cones, Rhinebeck United Methodist Church, Youth Group Benefit.
- Aug. 12-Sept. 4- Half Price Sale, clothing only, infant through adult, Hospital Shop, Rhinebeck, Thurs. Fri. Sat. 10 a.m. 5 p.m. Benefit Northern Dutchess Hospital.
- Aug. 21- Chicken Bar-b-q Elizaville United Methodist Church, First serving 4 p.m.
- Aug. 21- Lawn Sale at Christ Church, Red Hook, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Aug. 22- Beef Barbecue (rain or shine). Catered by Dr. David Block at St. Paul's Church, Tivoli. Benefit church.
- Aug. 24-25- Flower Show & Arts & Craft Show, Pine Plains, Sat. 1-9 p.m. Sun. 1-5 p.m.
- Aug. 28- Annual Bazaar Carmelite Sisters in Germantown, off Rte. 9G on Hudson, 12N to 5 p.m. Benefit Carmelite Sisters of the Aged & Infirm.
- Sept. 5- Annual Clambake at Harris-Smith Post 524, Tivoli. Grounds open 1 p.m., Bake at 3 p.m.
- Sept. 9 & 10- Rummage Sale Church of the Messiah Parish Hall, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Sept. 17, 18, 19- Annual Garage Sale at residence of Mrs. Alfred Bockman, 61 Arnett Rd., Rhinebeck, 10-4 p.m. Benefit Rhinebeck VFW Auxiliary.
- Sept. 18- Roast Beef Dinner & White Elephant Sale at Rhinebeck Grange 896, 5-7 p.m.
- Sept. 25- Smorgasbord, Beekman Chapter OES, at Masonic Temple, Rhinebeck. Continuous servings 5:30-7 p.m.
- Sept. 29- Hawaiian Bazaar & Card Party at Church of Messiah Hall, Rhinebeck, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Benefit North. Dut. Hospital Auxiliary.

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150 years of growing pains have matured county fair

by SANDY EWING

While the Dutchess County Fair today is considered one of the outstanding activities of its kind in the east, there were times over the past 150 years when the fair stumbled, fell and was close to oblivion.

Yes, today the fair is big business with a budget exceeding a third of a million dollars and drawing some 200,000 visitors (together with their pocketbooks) here each summer.

And like every major undertaking, it had to begin with the germ of an idea.

Few of those who attend the fair this year will be aware of its long and colorful history or the fact that today's gala spectacle is the product of an evolution which began with a small, social get-together of the Dutchess County Agricultural Society where farmers could talk to one another and show off their best animals, products and personal duds.

In short, it was a far cry from the giant annual amusement it is today.

County fairs in general have been taking place for longer than most people would suspect. They existed before the United States but their birth is clouded in controversy.

The first

Some fair historians claim that the first county fair was held in 1765 in York, Pennsylvania, when some area farmers got together after the harvest was in to sell livestock and exchange views.

Others say that Elkanah Watson was the inventor of the 'fair' when he tied his imported Spanish Merino sheep on the Village Green in Pittsfield, Massachusetts to show them off to other farmers. Because of this boastful act and his efforts to help organize agricultural societies he earned the title of the "Father of the New England Agricultural Fair".

At any rate the first Dutchess County Fair was held in Poughkeepsie in 1809. It was sponsored, as it is today, by the Dutchess County Agricultural Society, which had been formed three years earlier, in 1806.

The "Political Barometer" in its issue of February 25, 1806 reports that a meeting held on Saturday, February 15 at Cunningham's Hotel, in Poughkeepsie "Convened for

the purpose of considering the utility of an Agricultural Society, and for organizing the same."

Chairman Henry Livingston, read a long list of articles including the following:

1. This Society shall be denominated The Society of Dutchess county for the promotion of Agriculture.

2. The object of this society shall be improvement in Agriculture and rural occupancy.

3. The society shall consist of ordinary and honorary members, the former to be persons residing in the county of Dutchess, the latter persons residing elsewhere.

5. There shall be semi-annual meetings of the society, one to be held the Wednesday following the first sitting of the March Court, and the other the second Tuesday in October.

8. Every member on his admission shall pay to the Treasurer two dollars and also one dollar per annum during his continuance as a member.

12. The funds of the society shall be appropriated by the majority of the same to the objects of the institution, and to no other purpose whatsoever.

Farmers only

16. None but farmers shall be ordinary members of this society.

The Agricultural Society was formed and three years later its first fair was held in conjunction with the spring meeting. It was held most likely at a private home, although there seems to be no record as to where.

The "Political Barometer" of May 24, 1809, does report, however, that the fair was held on a Thursday and a Friday "and when considered as the first essay of the kind and not generally known, even through the county, was well attended. Some very good Cattle and Sheep were sold at high prices—young cattle and farrow cows were much in demand and sold readily at their full value. The whole was conducted with great order and regularity."

A social occasion

The early fairs were not only an occasion to show of one's livestock, however. It was also a social occasion to show off oneself.

"Several members appeared," says the "Political Barometer, again of May 24,

1809, "dressed in suits of their own Manufactory, particularly W. Allen, Esq., who wore a suit of black, made from his own Merino wool, spun, wove and fressed at Lithgow, at the expense of \$1.50 per yard, of 40 inches wide, and valued by competent judges at \$8 per yard, broad cloth width."

Fairs were held fairly regularly every few years, both in Poughkeepsie and in Washington Hollow. There was no single place in which the early fairs were held. Spectators moved around from private homes to fields for plowing contests and even to a church.

There were no side shows or balloons at the early fairs. Entertainment would come later. These were serious events. Competition for the prize money was fierce. And the fairs provided one of the few opportunities for acquaintances to get together and gossip.

The "Dutchess County Cattle Show and Fair" of 1823 was probably typical of the early fairs. The "Dutchess Observer" of November 26, 1823, reported on the fair as follows:

"The Dutchess Agricultural Society held its annual Meeting and Fair, for shew (sic) and sale of stock and articles, contemplated by law, on the 6th and 7th inst. at the village of Poughkeepsie.

"The Society met at an early hour of the first day, at Mr. Forbus', and the committee of arrangements appointed the several committees of view. Mr. John Delavergne, assisted by young Wilkinson and Delavergne, came with the Car of Industry, a large covered wagon decorated with all the different products of the county, drawn by 57 elegant oxen, accompanied by a band of music. The Society and the citizens immediately formed in procession, under the direction of Col. Davies, Marshal of the day, and preceded by the Car of Industry marched to the field of shew.

"After the viewing committees had performed their duty, the procession moved to the Court-House, where the Reverend Mr. Cuyler opened the exercises by prayer. Gen. Brush delivered an extemporaneous address upon practical farming, and the Reverend Doctor Reed closed

(Please Turn To Page 16)



An ancient poster for The 1867 Dutchess County Fair which was held in Washington Hollow.

A Bicentennial salute

A musical parade, saluting 200 years of American independence, will be conducted daily at the Dutchess County Fair, which opens Aug. 24 at 10 a.m.

The fair will open each morning during its six-day run to the sounds of the Dutch Arms Drum and Fife Corps of Rhinebeck.

The parade of 40 to 50 young musicians, led by DeWitt Gurnell, Rhinebeck town historian, will wind its way into the fairgrounds at the Mulberry Street entrance each day at 10 a.m. and march to the fair's antique village, renamed the Village of '76 this year.

Gurnell will lead a salute to the flag and the youngsters will perform music with a patriotic theme.

The Kipsbergen Patriots Drum and Fife Corps of Rhinecliff will also parade

through the Village of '76 during the fair.

The group is under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Whitley.

On Aug. 26, 27, and 28, marching and drill exhibitions will be conducted by the Armstrong Artillery Unit of the VFW of Red Hook and Livingston Drum and Fife Corps of Rhinebeck. At 5 p.m. the two groups will lead a parade from the Village of '76 to the grandstand where they will put on cannon and musket firing demonstrations.

The Livingston Drum and Fife Corps is under the direction of Mrs. John Donaher of Rhinebeck. Sidney Delaney of Red Hook is in charge of the Armstrong Artillery.

Music during the week will include such favorites as "Yankee Doodle," "You're In The Army Now," and many Revolutionary War songs.

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August 18-19, 1976

Cover: Richard Whalen of Friendship Farm, Millbrook, getting ready for the 1975 Dutchess County Fair.

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(Continued From Page 2)

with prayer, when the procession reformed and repaired to Mr. Forbus', and the Society and citizens partook of an excellent dinner. After which the Board met, received the reports of the several committees, and adjudged the premiums of the day. At evening there was a splendid ball, at Mr. Myer's Hotel, graced with the beauty and fashion of the county, and other guests.

"On the second day, the Society again formed in procession, preceded by the Car of Industry, and proceeded to the ploughing field to view the ploughing match, which was performed under the direction of the Committee of Arrangements.

"Three teams, one yoke of oxen each and the ploughman driving, started at the tap of the drum. One of the competitors ploughed a full quarter of an acre of close sward in 30½ minutes in elegant style; another, in like manner, in 33½ minutes; and the other, whose oxen proved to be unkind, was a considerable time longer. The committee being satisfied with the workmanship of all, decided the match according to the priority of finishing.

"The procession then went to

the Court House again, where the premiums were distributed to the successful competitors, and then returned to Mr. Forbes and again partook of an excellent dinner. After dinner the society transacted its ordinary business, and adjourned to meet again, at the next semi-annual meeting at Poughkeepsie. The affairs of both days were conducted with much good feeling and great satisfaction of the community at large.

Exhibition excellent

"The exhibition of Cattle, Sheep and Swine was very excellent, with the exception of Cows, which had been in some measure neglected to be shown. And the exhibition of Horses, generally, far exceeded any previous one, and induces a belief that the raising of fine horses in the county will by duly appreciated.

"The Wheat and Barley crops have been very good, and Corn extraordinary; the crop of Roots has also been very good. Premiums upon seeds will be determined at the spring meeting. The exhibition of family domestic manufactures, was very fine, and done great credit to the county.

That year there was \$419 awarded in "premiums" or prize money. The biggest

premium, \$30, went to John B. Van Wyck for the best farm. A premium of two dollars was awarded to Harriet Butler for "an elegant worked Cap".

In 1841 the Dutchess County Agricultural Society was re-organized. From that year until 1888 the fairs took place generally at Washington Hollow, near the present site of the Troop K police headquarters.

In 1888 the fair was moved to Poughkeepsie, to the Hudson River Driving Park, directly south of Cedar Avenue. Today the area is typically suburban.

The fair was held continuously in Poughkeepsie.

In 1902 it came back to Washington Hollow for one year. And in 1917, during the First World War, county Home Guards held a big demonstration during the county fair at the Driving Park to mobilize the people on the home front to help in the war effort.

A loser

But the fair was losing money fast. No fairs were held in 1916 or 1918. The society would lose its charter if no fair were held for two years running. Yet it had not paid its rental to the Driving Park for the last fair.

The owners of the park demanded that the 1917 debt be paid off and the 1919 rental paid

in advance if that year's fair were to be held there.

After much talk of discontinuing the fair a small group of Dutchess County Agricultural Society directors took the initiative. They reorganized the board and moved the fair to Springbrook Park in Rhinebeck, the site of the present fairgrounds.

The group which re-organized the society was headed by Assemblyman J. Griswold Webb. He was assisted by Tracy Dows, Dr. George N. Miller of Rhinebeck and Lyman Delano of Red Hook.

A Rhinebeck success

The fair was very successful, making money its first year at Springbrook Park and continuing to do so until 1927. That year there were several rains which caused flooding.

No exhibitors were able to get to the fairgrounds. The same rains occurred the following year, and now all the savings of the previous eight years were spent. The society went into debt again.

The situation was magnified from 1931-1944 because of the depression and a Polio epidemic.

But everything changed in 1945 and 1946. The war was over. Gas restrictions were lifted. Wages still were high, and people flocked to Rhinebeck and the Dutchess County Fair. All of the fair's debt was paid and there was even some money left over.

Funding

Few people know that the fair receives both county and state funding.

Last year it received about \$7,500 from Dutchess County and about \$8,700 from New York State. In 1950 those amounts were smaller. Nevertheless they helped the society purchase Springbrook Park and rename it the Fairgrounds.

At that time the fairgrounds incorporated 79 acres. In 1965 8.5 acres of adjoining land were purchased. Now, after two more purchases, the Fairgrounds has a land area of about 125 acres.

There have been many personalities associated with the Dutchess County Fair. People remember two of them especially Benson Frost and Herbert Thompson.

Frost spearheaded all the Agricultural Society members in raising money to save the fair. Each bad year he would drum up encouragement in the society. After one particularly bad year other members were so discouraged they balked at the idea of raising money. So Frost raised \$50,000 by himself.

"He kept the fair alive," says Raphael Mark, public information officer for the fair. "He believed in the concepts of a fair and an Agricultural Society and of keeping the flavor of Dutchess County alive."

Herbert Thompson was a Grange member and a reporter for the Poughkeepsie "New Yorker", later the "Eagle" and the "Journal". His careful chronicling of every nook and cranny of the fair officials alike looked forward to every year according to Mark.

There have been no accidents and few disasters, thanks to the expensive but reliable moveable show contracted each year by the fair. But Mark does remember one incident.

Parade fire

"It was about '61, during a Firemen's Parade," he remembers. Suddenly one of the buildings near the parade burst into flames. All the tanks were empty because the firemen and the trucks were in the parade.

The lesson was learned, however, "Now we keep fullfledged equipment ready at all times," said Mark.

The fair is now in a boom stage. It has developed into one of the largest county fairs in the state of New York. Last year about 178,000 people attended the fair. Mark remembers that when he started working 13 years ago it was considered a good year if 70,000 people attended.

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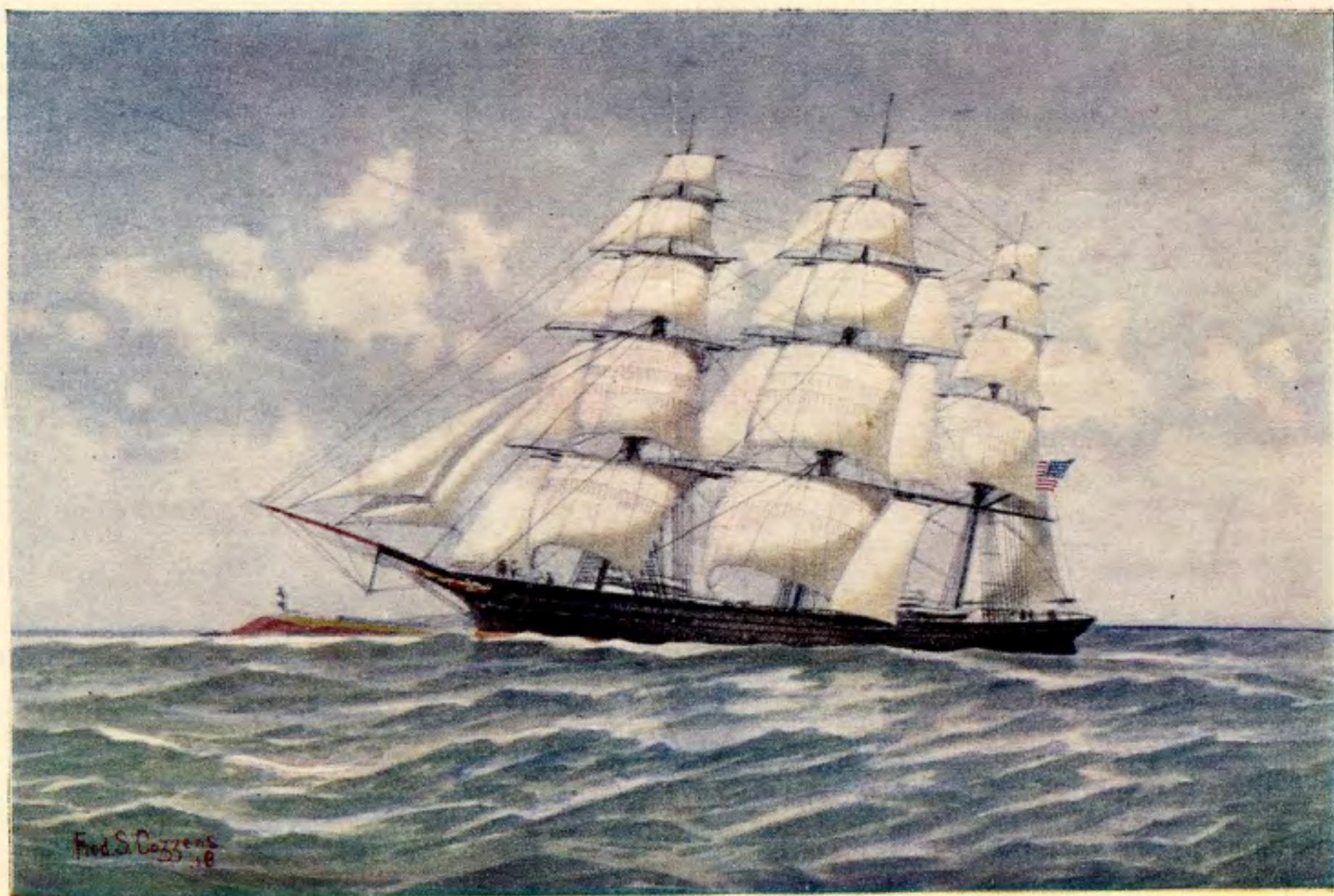
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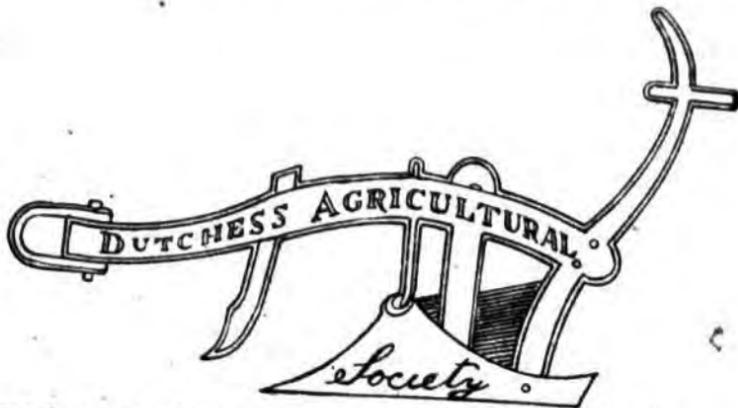


YOUNG AMERICA—1853

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS OF THE CLIPPER SHIPS—
ROUNDED CAPE HORN OVER FIFTY TIMES
LOST AT SEA IN 1888 WITH
ALL HANDS ABOARD

DUTCHESS COUNTY FAIRS IN OTHER DAYS

By George S. Van Vliet



The above is a cut of a silver plow owned by the writer, given as a premium to his great-grandfather, Capt. Frederick Uhl, by the Dutchess County Agricultural Society in the year 1816 for the best specimen of woolen cloth of family manufacture. This cloth was made of Spanish Merino wool from the flock of Robert R. Livingston, formerly Chancellor of the State of New York, who made probably the first importation of Spanish merino sheep to this country in 1802. My father informed me that his grandfather paid \$2.50 per lb. for this wool, in this he is partly corroborated by the late Edward Van Alstyne in his "History of Sheep in New York" in which he said that in 1812 Chancellor Livingston sold his wool for \$2.50 per lb.

In 1807 Livingston contributed to the Society for the Promotion of Useful Arts an essay on sheep and woolen manufacture and the advantages of improving the merino wool by the introduction of Spanish sheep. This was considered so valuable that by an act of the New York Legislature in March 1809 it was ordered that 1000 copies be printed at State expense. This essay refers to the fact that Livingston was a member of the Dutchess County Agricultural Society proving conclusively that an Agricultural Society existed in Dutchess county as early as 1807 or previous thereto.

The present organization seems to date from a meeting held at Emighs Hotel, Washington Hollow on Oct. 16, 1841. This was possibly a re-organization of the earlier organization. The fairs for a time were held at Washington Hollow and Poughkeepsie. The fairs held at the latter place were on grounds located where the Dutch church now stands on the corner of Mill and Catharine streets. The first president of the Society after this re-organization was Henry Staats, a large land owner and prominent resident of the town of Red Hook. His successors were among the foremost and most prominent men of Dutchess county. Among them were Judge Stephen Thorn, of Milan, one time State Senator, and grandfather of the present Stephen J. Thorn of Rhinebeck; Stephen Haight, of Washington; Cornelius DuBois, of Poughkeepsie; Elnathan Haxtun, of Beekman; Daniel B. Haight, of Washington; Peter R. Sleight, of Lagrange; John U. Able, of Union Vale, Wm. W. Haxtun, of Beekman; Stephen T. Angell, of Pleasant Valley; Benson J. Lossing, the historian of Dover, and Edward Gridley, of Amenia. The latter was president about 1880; he was an elder in the Presbyterian church at South Amenia and a man of high character. He was the first president that banished intoxicants from the fair grounds. I well remember hearing the pastor of the church that I attended the Sunday after the fair extolling Mr. Gridley for his act.

The first fair that I well remember having attended was in the year 1872 at that time and for ten or fifteen years later nearly every farmer in Dutchess county was breeding what is known as trotting bred colts, and at least five trotting bred stallions were standing for service in every town in the county. The great event of the fair was the race the last day between the stallions that had stood for service during the past year in the county, the purse was not large but it meant much to the winner in service fees for the coming year. Although I was but a child at the time I have a very distinct recollection of these magnificent animals and their owners. Among them were Joseph West, with Westdale, Mr. Frost with Superb, David S. Tallman with Manhattan, A. W. Laird with Dark Angel, Oscar Raynus with Messenger Duroc, Daniel B. Haight, David Sherow, Mr. Lown and Mr. Salpaugh of Red Hook and last but not least, Dick Mabbett.

No mention of the horse at the Washington Hollow fair would be complete without reference to Wellington M. Velie of Pleasant Valley. He was always on hand either as a judge of horses or of the races. It was Mr. Velie who purchased Flora Temple in 1850 for \$175, brought her to Dutchess county and developed her, selling her to Geo. E. Perrin of New York. On Oct. 15, 1859 at Kalamazoo, Mich. she trotted a heat in 2:19 3/4. This was the first time that a trotter had ever crossed the 2:20 line and Flora Temple was everywhere hailed as queen of the turf. Flora Temple died Dec. 31, 1877, aged 33 years. Wellington M. Velie died in California a few years ago at the advanced age of nearly 100 years.

In those days every person who attended the fair caught the racing spirit. It was an unwritten law that coming home from the fair no one should be allowed to pass you. If your horse could not trot let it run. It was no unusual occurrence to pass by wrecked wagons where three horses had been trotting abreast on a road only wide enough for one.

In the early days of the fair at Washington Hollow premiums were offered for the farm in the best state of cultivation in the county also for the best string of eight yoke of working oxen. There was much competition in both of these classes.

At the fair in 1873 George Ayrault's exhibit of fat cattle was one I well remember. Among them was the steer "Champion" that weighed 4000 pounds alive and the heifer "Queen" that weighed over 3000 pounds. These cattle were of the shorthorn breed beef type.

Probably the best known breeder and exhibitor of blooded stock the county fair has ever known or ever will know was Daniel B. Haight, who resided on the Plymouth Hill road in the town of Washington. Mr. Haight had five sons who resided with him and assisted him in his business. At one time he had five trotting stallions on his farm, all of which were cared for by his eldest son, Morgan. His herd of shorthorn cattle was one of the best in the country, taking many premiums at the New York State Fair as well as the county fair. He also had large flocks of Southdown and Cotswold sheep. On this farm today are Shorthorn cattle, descendant of the cattle bred by Mr. Haight more than half a century ago.

It was my privilege and pleasure to meet a son of said Daniel B. Haight at the recent county fair at Rhinebeck in the person of Mr. Leonard D. Haight of Washington.

Among other breeders of note were Nicholas V. Ham, of Clinton; C. S. Wainwright, of Rhinebeck, and Wm. Chamberlin, of Red Hook; all of whom exhibited Devon cattle, a breed now extinct in Dutchess county.

The Ayrshire herd of Eugene Ham of Verbank was exhibited at the fair a number of times about forty years ago. Mr. Ham was present at the 1919 Rhinebeck Fair.

Before closing I will refer to a never to be forgotten scene. It was at the fair of 1882 at the beginning of the bicycle craze that a race was staged as one of the attractions. The contestants were James H. Ostrander of Poughkeepsie, who up to that time was considered the best rider in the county; J. Hunting Bostwick, of Pine Plains, who was riding a wheel for his first year, and George C. Ham, of Washington Hollow, brother of John M. Ham, who is now President of the Agricultural Society. The grandstand and the hill overlooking the track were crowded with people. In the early laps Ostrander lead easily but in the last lap Bostwick gained rapidly, coming down the home stretch he rushed in ahead of Ostrander winning the race. The winner is the present affable and dignified President of Stissing National Bank of Pine Plains.

LOOKING BACKWARD

Interesting Items From the Rhinebeck Gazette Twenty Years Ago

RHINEBECK GAZETTE, OCT. 7, 1899

Fred Allen has secured a position with Elmer Coon, the grocer.

It is rumored that a roller skating rink will soon be opened on West Market street.

Ackert & Brown are building an addition to the residence of the Misses Westfall on Livingston street.

Augustus M. Traver has a handsome new team of black horses.

The frosts of the past week have killed the flowers and vines in the door yards and started the falling of the leaves.

Invitations are out for the marriage of Florence, daughter of Mrs. Josephine R. Lansing, of this village to Howard Burnett Speer, M. D., of New York, on Tuesday, October seventeenth at 3.30 o'clock, at the home of the bride's mother on Montgomery street.

The marriage of Miss Emily Helen Quick of Saugerties, well known to many in town, to Mr. C. Seymour Clark took place at the home of the bride, Wednesday at 12 o'clock noon. Miss-Grace D. Carroll of this village was maid-of-honor.

New York State's soldiers and sailors still in the service will be given an opportunity of voting at the November elections, providing the peace treaty is not ratified by the United States Senate before November 5. Attorney General Charles D. Newton holds that a state of war still exists until the treaty is ratified and accordingly, the men in the service must be provided with ballots and given a chance to express themselves at the polls, even though they may be in far off Siberia or in France.

"In these days it's almost impossible to get what you want."

"Yes. I remember when my husband would give me anything I wanted if I merely cried a little. Now I have to go into hysterics."—Life.

INFORMATION
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