

On August 31, 1909 the feature was a big airship which incidentally did not get off the ground until after 6 p.m. and was grounded the next two days because of rain. But it was a big attraction in its day and served its purpose well. So, from year to year, the attractions varied and the fair kept rolling along through rain, drouth, fire and hard times.

In addition to outstanding features, the fair provided such minor features as dog shows, pony shows, baby shows, gypsy fortune tellers, tight wire walkers, acrobats, educated horses, clowns, sack races, potato races, bicycle races, mule races, wagon races, tractor contests, and finally the horse pulling contests which could be classed as major attractions.

The Midway and carnival, without which no fair ventured to open its gates, provided the merry-go-round, ferris wheel, doll racks, bingo, popcorn stands, red lemonade, the fat lady and the thin man, the penny pitch, and, if the sheriff happened to be a tolerant man, you could often find a few games of chance to relieve you of surplus funds, and a "girl show." The Midway was a gay and glittering avenue indeed.

The amphitheatre, built in 1882, had a promenade high above ground at the rear of the seats, and was so constructed and located as to provide an ideal spot for the village crapshooters, especially on Sunday afternoons. The fire which burned the old amphitheatre down was generally attributed to cigarettes and crapshooters. Anyway, the fair had to be reorganized in 1921, and a new amphitheatre built, together with a new starter's stand and secretary's stand, at a cost of \$5,000. The fair of Aug. 30-Sept. 2, 1921 thus had new life and crowds accordingly.

The Golden Anniversary of the fair was held in 1931, and introduced a stage show entertainment with sound amplifiers, featuring racing and night entertainment. By then the morning shows had been discontinued for lack of attendance. Times were already beginning to show a change. Home talent entertainment from various parts of the county and from nearby towns, such as Quincy, Hannibal, Kirksville and Moberly, was well received and served as a stimulant to attendance.

The Shelby County Fair, however, like most county fairs, was built around two big features—saddle horses and racing.

From the time Billy C won his race in 1896, there was a long procession of fine harness racing, both trotters and pacers. There was Bay Wilkes, Rene Russell and Tom Grundy back in the old days. In 1923 there were, for example, 30 entries in the 2:16 pace, and all races were well filled, sometimes requiring the starting of races in two sections. A memorable race occurred on Friday, Sept. 12, 1924, when Marie Earl, Carl Gano and Korak Gratton fought six heats to win the Free-for-All pace. The race track at Shelbina was generally regarded among racing men as the best half mile track in Missouri, and owners of good horses liked to race here. Bob Cleek, Roy Lasley and J. A. Lucas were in charge of racing for many years, and produced some of the best racing in the history of the fair.

A roll call of the saddle horses which have been exhibited here would include many of the finest horses ever shown anywhere in the nation, including Rex Monroe, Easter Cloud, Astral King, Maurine Fisher, My Major Dare, Johnny Jones, Kentucky Best, Easter Serenade and many others. All of these horses won stakes at state fairs and society horse shows all over the country. The saddle horse show held on Aug. 25-28 1914 was perhaps the high point of saddle horse exhibition at Shelbina. At this fair Astral King, My Major Dare, Maurine Fisher, Easter Cloud and many others from such stables as Houchin & Anderson, Loula Long, E. D. Moore, Blades & Holman, were exhibited to a capacity crowd. The Shelby County Fair and the Greenwell Stables have contributed materially to the reputation of this area as the saddle horse center of America.

Today, alas, the Shelby County Fair seems to have run into stormy weather. The last few fairs have shown deficits instead of profits and the future of the fair is uncertain. Perhaps the changing times have made the fair an institution of yesterday. But whatever the future may hold, the Shelby County Fair, with its long and colorful history covering 77 years, making it one of the oldest county fairs in Missouri, will be cherished in the memory of many "old timers" as long as they live.



In Grandmothers' Dresses—Back row, Mrs. Horace Rice, Mrs. Harry Wanes, Mrs. David Hawkins, Mrs. Herbert Gilbert and Mrs. Clarence Edgar Renner. Bottom row, Mrs. W. P. Buckman, Mrs. Rubena Blackburn, Mrs. C. A. Lichty and Miss Helen Spencer.