

History of Fairs

The origin of fairs is obviously to be traced to the convenience of bringing together at stated times the buyers and sellers of the stock produce of a district. Fairs existed in ancient times as well as modern times, and are to be found in all parts of the world.

In the East, they are of great magnitude and importance. At Mecca, during the annual pilgrimages, and at Hardwar in Ajmir, a resort of pilgrims in Hindustan, two of the greatest fairs of the East, the association again exists between commerce and religion.

Fairs were regularly held in the principal cities of Mexico every fifth day, being the recognized substitute for shops. A fair for the sale of slaves was held at Azcapozales, near the capital. At the principal fair, held in Mexico City, the number of visitors reached 40,000 to 50,000.

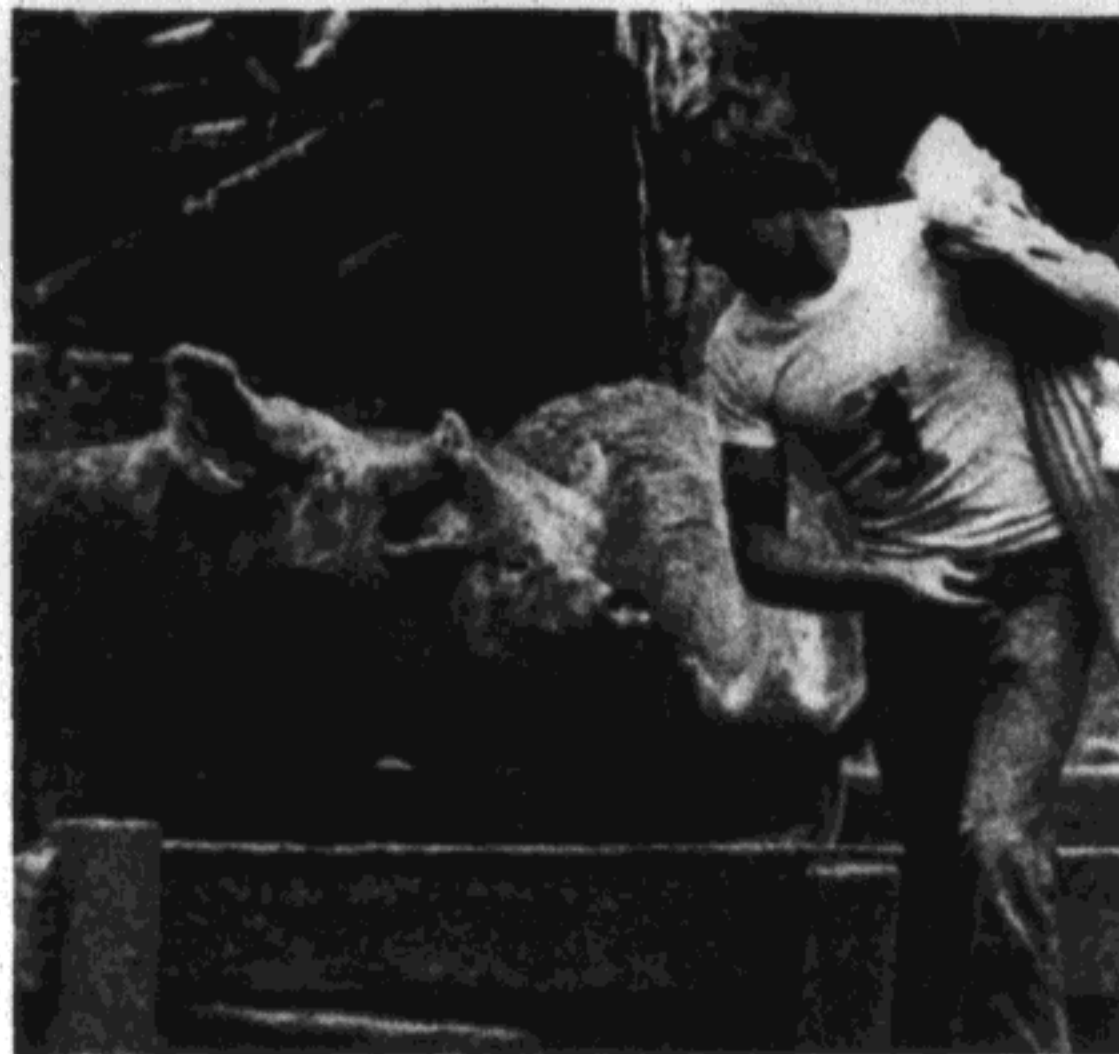
Here the same arrangements prevailed as in the European fairs of the Middle Ages.

The fairs of Great Britain mostly consist of the weekly market-days of country towns and certain agricultural meeting, or trysts, as they were called in Scotland, chiefly for the sale of cattle and horses.

In America the State and country fairs have developed into periodical exhibitions of agriculture, horticulture, stock raising, manufacturing, domestic science, education, transportation, good roads movement, political campaigns, arts and crafts, etc.

Agriculture and state fairs in Alaska have harmoniously sustained the old country fair atmosphere lost in so many of our sister states in the lower forty-eight.

While livestock, vegetable and canned jam and jelly entries create an at-



Four participants in one of the Tanana Valley Fairs of the past.

Photo courtesy of the Tanana Valley Fair

traction for fair attendance, Alaska's fairs continue to serve as good will ambassadors for our agricultural industry.

The Tanana Valley Fair has long been a strong advocate of agriculture. Since the Fair began in 1924, it has served as a regular agricultural exhibition at harvest time, displaying the bountiful crops and livestock of proud

and livestock of proud farmers.

The Tanana Valley Fair is celebrated its 46th year of existence this August. Janet Baird, manager of the fair, has an agricultural background which includes owning and operated a poultry farm with her husband on Badger Road in Fairbanks during the late 1950's and early 1960's.

When Mrs. Baird took over management of the fair, the financial picture for the fair was pretty dim. Under her management, the fair, has established a name for itself as a "smooth running" organization that produces an enjoyable and rewarding event at a profit.

Beginning in 1973, the

fair has been attempting to focus public attention on food production needed to sustain Alaska's future populations. Exhibits have been prepared with this to address this theme each year since putting special emphasis on one phase of agricultural production.

One aspect of agricultural production Baird does not think the fair has addressed sufficiently is bush agriculture. This year, all agricultural divisions will have special bush entries. Village residents are encouraged to send entries to the fair for exhibition and can contact the fair office at 452-3750 for further information.

A Look Back



Produce Exhibit at the Tanana Valley Fair around the middle of the 1920's.

University of Alaska Archives
Charles Bunnell Collection



This man is very obviously proud of his agricultural prowess, no date available on this photograph from the University of Alaska Archives.



Mixed emotions are evident on the faces of these two Grand Champion Winners from the 1974 Alaska State Fair.

Photo courtesy Tanana Valley Fair