

Earliest fairs in Deschutes area traced to days when interior was one big county

By Phil F. Brogan
Bulletin Staff Writer

Even when giant Crook County, created from Wasco in 1882, embraced virtually all of the interior country, the "west side" of the big county had its fairs.

But those first fairs were in Laidlaw, now Tumalo, not Redmond. In the little village that once aspired to be the metropolis of Central Oregon and a railroad division point, choicest produce grown in the western part of big Crook County was displayed.

Not until 1920 was the agricultural wealth of the new County of Deschutes displayed in Redmond, after the 10-year-old town had earlier served as host to the annual potato shows, held each fall when Netted Gems had been removed from expanding fields. The first potato show was in 1907.

The first Deschutes County Fair was held on October 14, 15 and 16, in distant 1920, the year that followed World War I. As early as 1918, preparations for the county fair in newly created Deschutes county were made, when incorporation took place under county fair laws.

Land Obtained

In preparation for the annual presentation of Deschutes County Fairs, 160 acres of land were obtained at the southeast edge of Redmond. The acreage extended across the canal and highway to the Redmond Golf Course of the present. Since then, some of the land along the railroad, over which trains rolled south to Bend in 1911, has been sold to industrial firms.

Quickly, the newly-acquired land took on the appearance of a fair ground. A grandstand was erected as early as 1920, with the main exhibit building constructed in 1922. A race track was built in 1919, and the first races, in connection with the county fair program, were held in 1920.

Rodeos have been held since 1933, old timers recall. Chutes were modernized in 1946.

Take Active Part

Ever since early years, Warm Springs Indians have taken an active part in the county fairs. They came to pick potatoes, then took time out to visit the fairs and join in the programs. Rodeos further interested the people from the Warm Springs country, across the Deschutes River from the Madras area.

County fairs at Redmond in early years were held about the time the potato harvest was getting well under way, generally early in October. Frost literally was on the pumpkin in those days, when produce was brought from the fields, to be displayed in the big agricultural building.

As early as 1925, the Deschutes County Fair Board and the Association found it necessary to enlarge and modernize the fair grounds plant. In that year, the board obtained a loan of \$4,500 from a bank in The Dalles, to provide for the needed enlargement. Fifteen Redmond men acted as individual signers. Eventually the bank was sold and the loan was called in. Eleven of the original 15 men finally had to pay off the loan — the others had

either died or moved from the community.

Money Problems

In the hard times of the 1930s, the fair again faced money problems. The American Legion took over operation of the fair for several years.

A colorful feature of the annual fairs, the buckaroo breakfasts, date to 1944. Equipment to prepare and serve the meal was obtained, on a loan, from the Redmond Air Base, then commanded by Major Vinson, now of Prineville. All equipment was returned — with the exception of a knife, that was lost.

Backyard chefs get safety tips

BOSTON (UPI) — Backyard chefs are warned not to barbecue themselves along with the steak.

Burn casualties among both cooks and consumers are frequent and sometimes serious, according to the National Fire Protection Association, a non-profit safety group.

The association suggests these precautions for the outdoor cooking season:

- Handle all starter fluids with care.
- Never add any kind of flammable liquid to an already-burning fire.
- Never use gasoline as a starter.
- Keep containers holding starter liquids far from the fire.
- Keep youngsters at a safe distance.



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