

# 225 YEARS OF HISTORY AT THE WASHINGTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL FAIR

AUGUST 12-19, 2023 | WASHINGTONFAIR.ORG



The "Washington County Society for the Promotion of Agricultural and Domestic Manufacture" was organized. This group was one of the first 19 groups of its kind to form in the United States (up to 1826). In 1822, fair was also held in a lot owned by James Ruth on East Maiden St., and in 1823 it was changed to the John Sample Farm which was located east on the National Pike. The top winner of the exhibition was James Gilmore, and he was awarded \$16 for "the best Merino Ram and two best Merino Ewes and Best Brood Sow." Over the next few years, the fair was held on a lot on the southside of W. Chestnut St. on a lot owned by Samuel MacFarland.

The "Washington County Society for the Promotion of Agricultural and Domestic Manufacture" was dissolved and the lands were sold to Washington & Jefferson College; however, in the following May, the Western Pennsylvania Agricultural Society was formed. Some organizers included: Julius LeMoyné, Robert Carrons, A.G. Happer, R.D. Wylie and W.W. Hunter. They raised \$20,000 (from 400 subscribers, each paying \$50) and were able to obtain grounds in Tylerdale.

The fair was held over the Fourth of July and included horse and mule racing, a four-day horseshoe pitching competition, a lime crushing contest and the Stock Judging Contest became an annual event. There was also a contest for loaves of bread baked by girls, not over 16, to encourage them to showcase their homemaking skills. Coin operated turnstiles were initiated to reduce line wait time at the gates.



The first market sale was held and was known as "The First Baby Beef Show and Sale. By 1965, the sale had extended to include sheep, offering fair goers "The Second Annual Baby Beef and Fat Lamb Show and Sale."

The old Cummins Barn was taken down and the new Racehorse Barn was built and opened.

First fair in the region takes place. The fair is named the "Morganza Fair" and served as an exhibition to sell sheep and cattle.

The society became incorporated and obtained a charter. At this time, the property known as the Fair Grounds had been purchased and was located near Trinity Hall on Park Ave. and South. Main St. The fair remained and was held here for 30 years.

No fair took place in Washington County; however, in June of 1911, the Washington Fair Association with the sole purpose to bring the fair back to its hometown. With \$40,000 collected from 800 shareholders, the association was able to purchase 100-acres of land in Arden, PA.

A dog show was added to the Fair schedule. Pigeons were added to the poultry judging. Auto and motorcycle racing was held at the grandstand, and a fireworks display was offered.

The 200th Anniversary of the Washington County Fair was celebrated. A commemorative cookbook with Fair History and photos was published. The Fair Board used the celebration to dedicate itself to making the Washington County Fair a growing and flourishing enterprise that is committed to its members of the agricultural community.

Over 2,000 animals were shown at the 224th Washington County Agricultural Fair, with 2,600 agricultural exhibits and 6,600 youth and craft exhibits.

OCTOBER 1798 | DECEMBER 1821 | MARCH 1822 | SEPTEMBER 1847 | MAY 1855 | OCTOBER 1866 | DECEMBER 1885 | SEPTEMBER 1898 | 1901 1911 | SEPTEMBER 1913 | JULY 1914 | 1917 | 1926 | 1953 | 1964 | 1974 1997 | 1998 | 2002 | 2010 | 2021 | 2022 | AUGUST 2023

The first long-standing effort to organize an Agricultural Society in Washington County took place. Two committees were formed – one to draft by-laws and the other to solicit subscribers. By October 1824, they had 214 subscribers.

A shocking 1,422 entries were made for the fair this year – an all-time high at the time. The grandstands and horse track were also added at this time.

Admission prices to the fair were 25 cents per person or vehicle. The fair stayed in Tylerdale until 1901.

Now with a permanent home for the fair, the Fair Association was able to concentrate its efforts on offering a wide variety of educational and entertaining activities, exhibits and contests. The Stock Judging Contest was introduced, and quite progressive at the time, allowed boys and girls to participate. In total, 39 boys and one girl participated in the contest and were awarded free admission to the ground. The Stock Judging Contest winner was awarded a 13-week course at Pennsylvania State University, which was donated by the Fair Association.

The Junior Exhibit building was erected, allowing more and new types of items and animals to be exhibited.

DeLoyd Thompson, a professional aviator from Washington, PA, gave the first exhibition of trick flying in an airplane ever witnessed in the County.

The Fairgrounds went through further expansion with the construction of Exhibit Halls 2 and Hall 4.

The fairgrounds received a major facelift with the construction of the stone entrance, the new video board and perimeter fencing along North Main Street.

The "Washington County Society for the Promotion of Agricultural and Domestic Manufacture" was reorganized and they hosted their first fair Oct. 15, 1847. They had 273 members – each paying \$1 for their membership to the society. The fair was scheduled for October for the next two years. The next time the fair would move would be 1852.



The fairgrounds have undergone a lot of physical changes throughout these years. These include, but are not limited to, the Pony Barn was built, the 4-H Horse Barn was erected and allowed all 4-H horses to be located in a single barn, the bleachers in the Grandstand were demolished and replaced with aluminum ones, Floral Hall was built and Exhibit Hall 1 was built to allow more room, the Pig Barn was built, the Fair Office was replaced, the mainstage has been replaced.

The Washington County Agricultural Fair celebrates its 225th anniversary!

