

THE MERCER COUNTY FAIR ***CELINA, OHIO***

1852 - 2002



Mercer County Agricultural Society
& Mercer County Historical Society, Inc.
Passport to History Series Book XII

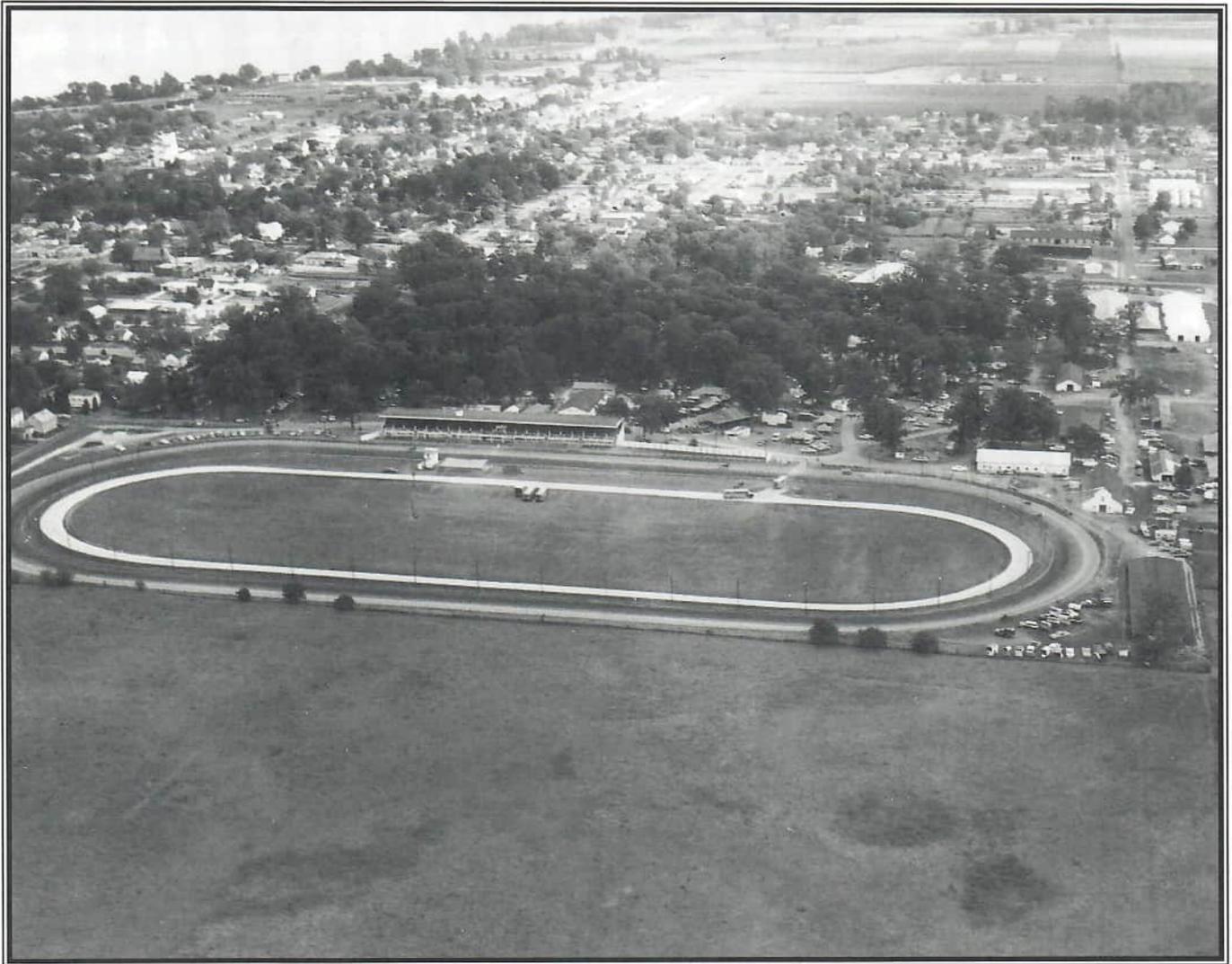


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THE MERCER COUNTY FAIR, *CELINA, OHIO*, 1852 - 2002

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Mercer County Fair Board Secretary

Marketing & Summer Staff at Mercer County Fair Office

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Published by the Mercer County Agricultural Society &
the Mercer County Historical Society, Inc., Celina, Ohio

Passport to History Series, Book XII.

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ISBN: 1-891095-21-8

Printer: The Messenger Press, Carthage, Celina, Ohio



MERCER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY 2002 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Seated: Steve Seitz, Gina Lee, Bob Geist, Denise Cummins.
 Standing: Jim Yaney, Tim Pearson, Pat Schmitt, Marv Geier, Short (Roger) Wilker, Ron Boroff,
 Jerry Bollenbacher, Barb Pierce, Scott Niekamp, Ken Knapke, Bob Berry.
 (absent from photograph: Dick Beougher, Ryan Muhlenkamp and Diana Grile)

The Mercer County Fair Ground is owned by the County. The Fair is governed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and is managed by a Board of Directors, elected for a three year term, six being elected yearly. Three at large, and one director from each township meet monthly. The year 2002, the Fair Board is celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the first Mercer County Fair in 1852. New buildings have been constructed; special events for the celebration have been planned. For a detailed list of events at the 2002 Mercer County Banner Fair, please see the Mercer County Banner Fair Book 2002.

The Fair Board Members were asked to comment about their fair, and/or their favorite memories.

Bob Geist, President, "I appreciate the hard work and efforts of the people who made the improvements to turn the Fair around in the past five years. I have served as a Fair Board Member for six years."

Steve Seitz, Vice President, "My most enjoyable part of the Fair is when the Junior Fair kids bring their livestock into the Show Arena. The look in their eyes and the smile on their faces of excitement is unforgettable. Then, when the winner is chosen and they are handed their trophy, they are so proud of their accomplishment. I am also proud of the way the Mercer County Fair Board has been working together to improve the Fair the past few years.

Gina Lee, Treasurer, "As a native of Logan County, we came to Mercer County in 1997. Our first Mercer County Fair was in 1998. We enjoyed the family atmosphere. We enjoyed the rides and the Junior Fair programs. I have served as a Fair Board Member since 1999."

Denise Cummins, Secretary, "My favorite part of the Mercer County Fair is the Harness Racing. My husband and I look forward to it every year! I also enjoy the Petting Zoo."

Dick Beougher, "Having served several years on the Fair Board, I have enjoyed being a part of the Fair, as well as serving as Chairman of the Floral Department at the Mercer County Fair.

Bob Berry, "Having served on the Fair Board for fifteen years, I have enjoyed being a part of the Fair and meeting new people and making new friends."

Mercer County Commissioner Jerry Laffin Sponsor



New Fair building Under construction, May, 2002



New Showers and Rest Rooms, 2002 photograph

Jerry Bollenbacher, “My memories of the Fair go back to the mid-forties, when Dad would dump us off at the East gate with a dollar in hand to last the day. Many good times are recalled at the Penny Arcade, walking the Midway, winning Kewpie Dolls and Teddy Bears, and participating in the ‘Kid’s Day’ Events. The Wheel Barrow, 3-legged, sack and backward races were much fun. The Statler Brothers shows rank high for entertainment brought to the Fair. The luck or ability to hire our present ride company was a big factor in turning the Fair around. Also, the support of the community through sponsorships and attendance and the co-operation of the Fair Board, County Officials, Horsemen and various committees have made and are making many improvements to the Fair Grounds. Our biggest asset is our youth and the clubs that teach them leadership and many things they will use throughout their lives. They deserve all of our support. I have been on the Fair Board since the late 1980’s, involved mostly with the Harness Horse Program.

Ron Boroff, “I enjoy helping to put the Fair on each year. Having served on the Fair Board for 15 years, I think that the Fair is a positive influence on the children.”

Marv Geier, “This is my first year on the Fair Board. I am involved in livestock, especially the swine. I work on communication between the Junior and Senior Fair Boards; I enjoy that. Mercer County has great 4-H and F. F. A. youth and leaders. I also work on committees for Building and Grounds, and the Long Range Planning, which is challenging, but also rewarding.”

Diana Grile, “Senior Day 2001 was my most memorable time. Giving to the Seniors was a great experience. The Senior King and Queen Contest was my favorite. My goal is to be a team player with the entire fair as my project. I have served on the Fair Board for two years.”



Fair Board Secretary’s Office, 2002
This building was moved to the Fair in 1975.
(The Office had been in the Courthouse.)



Fair Barns, 2002 photograph

Mark & Jean Giesige Family Sponsor

Ken Knapke, "Just to see the difference from the years of 1970 and 1971 when I showed cattle, until now, is my most memorable part of the Fair. This is my second year on the Fair Board."

Ryan Muhlenkamp, "I have enjoyed being a part of the Fair Board, and the Long Range Planning Committee. I am proud of all the good things happening at the Mercer County Fair."

Mike Niekamp, "My most memorable Fair dates back to the days of my youth, in the early 1960's. I was a high school student at the time and enjoyed going to the Fair with my friends. We all enjoyed looking at the girls on the Midway. They also had a new ride at the Fair, called a 'Loop-O-Plane.' It would go up in the air and turn upside down and around. We rode that ride until we were dizzy. I still see that ride at the Fairs today, over 40 years later."

Scott Niekamp, "My most memorable year at the Fair was when I took Ms. Leona Rocket. She was a three year old Quarter Horse Mare. She won almost every class I went in. We showed Showmanship, Halter, Horsemanship, Western Pleasure, Reining, Western Riding, Egg and Spoon, Stakes, Barrels and Poles. This Mare was the best 4-H horse I ever had."

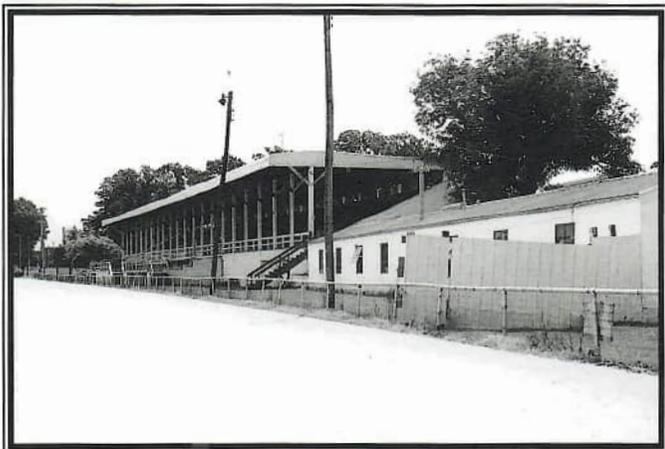
Tim Pearson, "I have had many fond memories of the Fair. I was 16, the first time I attended the Mercer County Fair. Leisa Florence and I rode the Paratrooper together. We started dating that Fall and then we got married about eight years later. I have also enjoyed watching my kids, Seth, Lindsey and Garth compete in the Junior Fair events."

Barb Pierce, "Prior to being on the Fair Board, I owned and operated a deep fried veggie concession. Working with the outside vendors is a real pleasure, having been a concessionaire. I enjoy meeting and working with people."

Pat Schmitt, "Being on the Fair Board reminds me of the times when I showed my steers and slept in the back of the truck. Being a Board Member takes time, but the rewards of having a good Fair is worth all the work. Enjoy your time at the Fair and join in on the fun."

Short (Roger) Wilker, "I have come full circle. As kids, we were caught sneaking into the Fair. Now, it is ironic, as I am Chairman of the Gate Committee, to make sure people purchase tickets. The main reason I serve on the Fair Board is working with the kids, especially on Kids' Day, and with their rides."

Jim W. Yaney, Sr., "My most memorable Fair is organizing the 2001 Fly Over, with the Ohio Air National Guard from Toledo. I also enjoy the Kid's Day, Commercial Building and the Entertainment."



Grand Stand and Fair Board Secretary's Office
View from the Race Track, 2002



Grand Stand, View from South Side, 2002
Erin Pierstorff, Summer Staff Member

Mercer Co. Commissioner Ray Cron
Mercer Co. Commissioner Tom Gagel Sponsors

The Mercer County Fair, Celina, Ohio 1852-2002

Preface by Joyce L. Alig, Director
Mercer County Historical Museum

The Mercer County Fair, Celina, Ohio, 1852-2002, "*Passport to History Series, Book XII*," is an invitation to join Mercer Countians as they visit the last 150 years of the Mercer County Fair. The Mercer County Fair is a part of a larger history of Mercer County and of Ohio. Mercer County has always been a rural, agricultural county. Mercer Countians participated in the Grange movement in Ohio before the Civil War, and they initiated the Mercer County Fair in 1852. Mercer Countians have practiced successful agribusiness practices as Mercer County continues to be Number One in Agriculture in the State of Ohio. This book is a tribute to the Mercer County Agricultural Society, the Ohio State Extension Office, the Junior Fair Board and Exhibitors who have planned and implemented the annual Mercer County Fairs. This book is a tribute to Mercer County's heritage.

How did this book come about? The Fair Board asked the Mercer County Historical Society, Inc. to provide an historical book for the 150th Anniversary of the 2002 Mercer County Fair. Fran Guilbault, Museum Volunteer, offered to read newspaper microfilm, 1852-2002, and write about each Fair. Joyce Alig, Museum Director, agreed to type the book, add photographs, write captions to illustrate them, to lay out the book, and index it for Messenger Press to print. That is how this book came about, in five months. This book is not a history of the Fair, taken from the Minutes of the Fair Board of Directors. This book does reflect the heritage of the Mercer County Fair, for Mercer Countians.

Having printed over a dozen local history books with the *Passport to History Series*, the Mercer County Historical Society, Inc., has taken Mercer Countians through many paths of their own history. **The Mercer County Fair, Celina, Ohio, 1852-2002**, "*Passport to History Series Book XII*," takes the reader through the history of the place which is the most fun of all—the **Mercer County Banner Fair!**

The Mercer County Historical Museum

Welcome to the Mercer County Historical Museum, the Riley home, 130 East Market, Box 512, Celina, Ohio 45822. This Museum is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and owned by the Mercer County Commissioners. The Mercer County Historical Museum is administered by the Executive Board of Directors of the Mercer County Historical Society, Inc. Board Members of 2002 include David Riley, Frank Snyder, Donald Muhlenkamp, Harry Frech, Jerry Meyer, David McNeilan, Henry Leugers, Floyd Winner, and Officers: President Joyce L. Alig; Vice President Philip Naumann; Secretary Marjorie Pierstorff, and Treasurer George Schroyer. Joyce L. Alig has served as Director of the Mercer County Historical Museum since 1973.



The Mercer County Fair, Celina, Ohio 1852-2002

Introduction by Fran Guilbault

The year 2002 will see the Mercer County Agricultural Society celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the first Mercer County Fair. But, it will not be the 150th County Fair. Mercer County Fairs have had a uneven history. The first fair was held in 1852, a one day event. There were again one day fairs held in 1853, 1854, and 1855. After that was a period of twelve years when no fairs were held, 1856-1867.

Then, in 1868 the Agricultural Society reorganized and announced that after a long lapse they planned to hold the First Annual Mercer County Fair. The Fair was to be held in the beautiful grove adjoining the Reservoir near Celina. The Fair was to be held on October 14, 15, and 16. The Society then started counting the "annual" fairs from that year. That would make the 2002 Fair, the 135th, except there were no fairs held in 1932, 1933, 1934, and 1949. So from the year of reorganization, the 2002 Fair would be the 131st. If you go back and add the four fairs held in the 1850's, then the 2002 Fair will be the 135th held in Mercer County. Now, does all of that make sense to the reader? One thing is for sure; the year 2002 will be the 150th Anniversary of the first Fair held.

Fairs go back a long ways in Ohio history. Besides being one of the big social events of the year in many counties, they also were created to find and reward the best agricultural products and techniques. The first Agricultural Society in Ohio was founded in 1818 in Trumbull County. Ashtabula County claims that they held the first Agricultural Fair in 1823. Geauga County still lays claim to having the oldest continuous Agricultural Fair held in Ohio. Historically speaking, the first Ohio State Fair was held at Camp Washington near Cincinnati. It was sponsored in 1819 by the Cincinnati Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Manufacturers, and Domestic Economy.

From the earliest days fires were always a big danger at the early fairs and fairgrounds. The buildings and grandstand were made from wood and there were many open fires for cooking at the fairs. As a result, the early years saw many fires at the fair sites. This was something that was also seen at the Mercer County Fairgrounds. There were also serious calamities that affected most fairs over the years, such as; the Civil War, World War II, the Great Depression, and the polio epidemic. These also had an effect on the local Fair. Mercer County did continue the Fairs during World War II. The war ended during the 1945 Fair. It was reported that when the announcement was made, so many people threw their ration tokens and food stamps into the air that it looked like flying confetti.

The story of the county fairs began in Ohio in 1846 when the Ohio Legislature created the Board of Agriculture. Very successful district fairs were held in Wilmington in 1847 and Xenia in 1848. It was in 1847, that the Mercer County Agricultural Society was first formed. After seeing the success of the district fairs, the first official Ohio State Fair was scheduled for September 1849. It was not held; an outbreak of Asiatic Cholera forced its cancellation. Finally, in 1850 the First Ohio State Fair was held outside of Cincinnati. It was a two day affair. Admission was 20 cents, and the two day affair had an attendance of close to 30,000 people. The Grange, founded in 1867 as the Patrons of Husbandry, also contributed to the betterment of agriculture. The history of the Grange in Mercer County can be found on page 69 of this book.

The first ever Mercer County Fair was held for only one day, on October 28, 1852. The entrance fee was 25 cents for anyone twenty-one years of age and older. The competition was very light, but they still didn't make enough money to pay all the premiums and expenses. Three more poorly supported Fairs took place, and then none was held for twelve years because of lack of interest and lack of support.

The fair was then revived in 1868 with "The First Annual Mercer County Fair." From then on the local Fair took off and grew in popularity. The fairs were all held on the grounds bordering the lake. In 1878 The Agricultural Society purchased land that is now a part of the present Fairgrounds. The first Fair was held there in 1894. Later the Society purchased more adjoining land. Eventually, one of the best regulation tracks for horse racing was built. A large amphitheater was also added to the south side of the track that would seat up to 4000 people.

When the fair was revived in 1868, it was developed into a three day event. In 1876, it was expanded to four days. In 1886 because of bad weather an extra day was added for the first five day Fair, but that was for only that year. In 1899 the first five day Fair was held. After that some years it was held for five days, and at times because of finances or problems it was cut back to four. But it gradually expanded into a full week event.

Because of finances or lack of finances during the Great Depression there were no Fairs held in 1932, 1933, and 1934. Then in 1935 the Celina American Legion took over and ran the Fairs through 1939. With the programs developed by President Franklin Roosevelt to help the unemployed a new grandstand was built. This was done through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). World War II quickly brought an end to the Great Depression, and after the war, the popularity of the Mercer County Banner Fair took off again. The first organized 4-H Club in Mercer County occurred in 1920. By 2001, ten of the 35 organized clubs have been active for 45 or more years; Chatt Chums have been active for 68 years. In 1952 the Fair celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the first Fair held in 1852. Many special and new events were carefully planned, but very heavy rains and wet and muddy grounds cut into attendance.

Today, the Fairgrounds consist of about sixty acres of land and thirty buildings. Many of the buildings are used all year. The Fairgrounds has also developed camping sites that can be used for a small fee. After 150 years of struggling and then success, the Fairs go on, and the improvements of the events and the Fairgrounds, also goes on.

This overview has references from the Agricultural Society Secretary's files of Ginny Miller and Ruth Myers, and articles by Pat Petzel (*Buckeye Farm News*, June 2000) and AAA Magazine (*Home and Away*, July/August 2000). In the history, the specific newspaper articles are given a reference and date. Permission to use the newspaper articles, in this book, was given by Frank Snyder, *Daily Standard*, Celina, and Robin Link, *Mercer County Chronicle*, Coldwater, Ohio. The *Western Standard*, *Mercer County Observer*, *Mercer County Standard* and *Der Mercer County Bote* newspapers were also used. The newspaper microfilm can be found at the Coldwater Library and the Mercer County District Library. The very old post cards and photographs are in the Archival Collections at the Mercer County Historical Museum. The more recent photographs are in the Archival Collections at the Mercer County Agricultural Society's Office. Private Citizens also loaned their photographs of the Fair, for this book. The annual Mercer County Fair Books also provided specific information about the Mercer County Fairs.

THE MERCER COUNTY FAIR, CELINA, OHIO
THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS: 1852-1902

1852

The Mercer County Agricultural Society had been organized in 1847 but little was done until 1852. On June 8, 1852 a meeting was held and a committee of five was set up to plan the first Mercer County Fair: G.W. Raudabaugh, Willshire Riley, Francis Miller, W. L. Browning, and James Watson Riley. (*Western Standard*, Celina, Ohio; June 17, 1852)

The first Mercer County Fair was a one day event held on October 28, 1852, at Celina, Ohio. It is unclear as to where the first Fair was held. It may have been by the Lake. (See the year 1866.) By 1872, the Mercer County Fair was to be held on 17-18 acres of land owned by the State of Ohio, which is the present site (2002) of Mercelina Park, on Lake Shore Drive, just east of Main Street going east on Warren and Logan Streets, and south of Cherry and Buckeye Streets, in Celina. The land was purchased by the Agricultural Society in February 1872 and used for this Mercer County Fair until 1894. (See the 1876 and 1888 Maps of Celina.)

1853

The second Mercer County Fair was held on October 29, 1853.

1854

The third Mercer County Fair was held on October 29, 1854.

1855

The Agricultural Board made plans to meet March 6, 1855, to arrange the purchase of the Fair Grounds. (*Western Standard*, February 22, 1855) The fourth Mercer County Fair was held on October 11, 1855.

1856

No Mercer County Fair was held because of a lack of interest.

1857

No Fair was held because of a lack of interest. The Agricultural Society did meet to discuss maybe holding a Fair. No action was taken by the Board Members: President Francis Miller; Vice President Isaac M. Price; Secretary William L. Blocher; Treasurer Benjamin Linzee; and Directors Enos Hayes, Ed Piper, G. Linift, Jacob S. Nox, and J.M. McDonald. (*Western Standard*; July 16, 1857)

1858

No Fair was held. A letter to the paper from a "member" of the Agricultural Society explained why no County Fairs were held since 1855. He stated that "*the people of Mercer County didn't have the spunk and perseverance enough to support it.*" He further stated that he had trouble getting people involved. He especially pointed out that the farmers in the southern townships of Marion, Granville, Gibson, Butler, and Franklin supplied very few members to the Agricultural Society. He emphasized that "*No Fairs could be held until membership grew substantially.*" (*Western Standard*; June 17, 1858)

Deluxe Dry Cleaners Sponsor

Blow is the 1852 report of the society to the State Board of Agriculture.

Report of the officers of the Mercer County Agricultural Society, To the State Board of Agriculture:

The President and Secretary of the Mercer County Agricultural Society respectfully report:

The society was organized in pursuance of an act of the Ohio Legislature, passed Feb. 28, 1846, and the several supplementary and amendatory acts thereto, on the 27th day of March, 1852. Thirty-three names were enrolled, and the following persons were elected to the several offices:

President—Justin Hamilton, Mendon.

Vice President—Benj. Linzee, Celina.

Secretary—Wm. L. Blocher, Celina.

Treasurer—Elisha Phelps, Celina.

Directors—Moses Collins, Mercer; J. W. Riley, Celina; William McDaniel, Ft. Recovery; William Hamilton, Mendon; Stephen Howick, Celina.

On the 28th day of October, the first Fair of the Society was held at Celina. This was but an experiment, being the first effort ever made in the county; but the result satisfied everyone that we CAN and WILL have a flourishing Society, and that the "swamps" of "hoop-poledom" will yet be known in Ohio, second to no part of the State in fertility and productiveness. Such is now the case. We are blessed with a body of land equal in quality, to that of any portion of the State, and all that is necessary to make this fact known generally, is an effort on the part of those who are masters of the soil. A good beginning is made, and the future promises well. All things considered, the Fair was well attended, though the competitors for premiums were not so great as expected.

We herewith annex the report of the Treasurer of the Society, marked "A," and also a printed statement of the wheat and corn raised in the county in 1851, as ascertained by the several Township assessors—marked "B."

Premiums were awarded on corn and wheat crops—the former to Wm. Hays, of Hopewell township, and the latter to Timothy Hawkins, of Centre township. The necessary affidavits and certificates accompanied the statements made by these gentlemen. Mr. Hays raised on one acre of land, ninety-seven bushels, one gallon and two quarts of corn, and Mr. Hawkins cut and threshed from one acre of land thirty-eight and one-fourth bushels of wheat.

LIST OF PREMIUMS
For the Mercer County Fair,
To be held at Celina, on the 28th of October, 1852.

HORSES.

Best stallion,	30.00
Best brood mare, with a colt at her side,	3.00
Best gelding,	2.00
Best mare,	2.00
Best colt,	2.00
Best Mule colt,	2.00

CATTLE.

Best bull under three years old,	3.00
Best cow,	2.00
Best yoke of oxen under 5 years old,	2.00
Best bull calf,	2.00
Best heifer calf,	2.00

SHEEP.

Best buck,	2.00
Best ewe,	2.00
Best lot of six sheep, or more,	3.00

HOGS.

Best boar under 3 years old,	2.00
Best brood sow, under 3 years old,	2.00
Best lot of pigs, 5 or more, under 6 mos.	2.00

POULTRY.

Best lot of fowls, not less than 3, male and female,	1.00
Best lot of fowls shown by one exhibitor,	1.00

FARMING UTENSILS.

Best wagon for general purposes,	2.00
Best soil plow,	2.00
Best stubble plow,	1.00

FIELD CROPS.

Best crop of wheat, not less than 1 acre,	3.00
Best crop of corn, do do	3.00
Best crop of barley, do do	2.00
Best crop of rye, do do	2.00
Best crop of oats, do do	2.00
Best crop of clover-meal, do do	3.00
Best crop of potatoes, not less than 1/4 acre	1.00
Best bushel of potatoes,	1.00

Miscellaneous.

Best set of harness,	2.00
Best saddle and bridle,	2.00
Best side saddle,	1.00
Best pair of fine boots,	1.00
Best pair of coarse boots,	1.00
Best 10 pounds of butter in rolls,	1.00
Best cheese not less than 10 pounds,	1.00
Best 10 pounds of honey in the comb,	1.00
Best pair of woolen blankets,	1.00
Best 10 yards of flannel,	1.00
Best 10 yards of linen,	1.00
Best 10 yards of jeans,	1.00
Best double coverlet,	1.00
Best bed quilt,	1.00
Best pair of woolen stockings,	1.00

FRUIT.

Best lot of apples, not less than 3 varieties,	1.00
Best lot of pears,	1.00
Best lot of peaches,	1.00
Best plums,	1.00
Best grapes,	1.00

Total value of premiums, \$23.00
Entrance fee for each animal, or lot of animals intended for exhibition, by competitors for a premium, 50 cents; bowls and other articles, free. Men over 21 years, 25 cents. By order of the
BOARD OF MANAGERS.

THE STANDARD.

PUBLISHED BY
BLOCHER & SNYDER.
WILLIAM L. BLOCHER, EDITOR.

CELINA, OHIO:
Thursday, - - - November 18, 1852.

Agricultural Meeting.
The annual meeting of the Mercer County Agricultural Society, will be held in the court house in Celina, on the first Tuesday, being the 7th day of December, 1852.—Officers for the ensuing year are to be elected. A full attendance of the members is requested, and all others who feel an interest in the welfare of the Society, are earnestly solicited to be present.
WM. L. BLOCHER, Sec.
Celina, Nov. 16, 1852.

List of Premiums
Awarded by the Mercer county Agricultural Society, the first annual Fair, held in Celina, on the 28th of October, 1852.

Samuel Shaffer, best Stallion,	30.00
Frederick Markley, best Brood Mare,	2.00
Samuel Milligan, best Gelding,	2.00
E. C. Trim, best yearling Colt,	2.00
Robert Burdge, best 2 year old Mare,	2.00
Wm. Tullis, best 3 years old Colt,	2.00
David Hays, best Colt,	2.00
J. W. Riley, best Cow,	2.00
E. Handley, best Calf,	2.00
William Browning, best Boar,	2.00
Geo. C. Coney, best coop of Fowls,	1.00
Geo. C. Coney, best lot of Fowls,	1.00
Timothy Hankins, 1st premium on one acre of Wheat, of early ripe variety, product of 1 acre 3 1/2 bushels,	3.00
Wm. Hays, one acre of Corn, of the earliest variety, producing 97 1/2 bushels to the acre,	3.00
Homer Bushnell, best bushel Potatoes,	1.00
Justin Hamilton, field of Oats 6 47-100 acres, producing 333 bu., honorary premium	
Miscellaneous Articles.	
Mrs. Rachel Hays, best 10lbs. Butter,	1.00
Mrs. Justin Hamilton, best Cheese,	1.00
same best 10 yds. Jeans,	1.00
same best 10 yds. Flannel,	1.00
same best 10 yds. Linsey,	1.00
Miss Susan E. Riley, best Bed Quilt,	1.00
Mrs. E. Snyder, 2nd best Bed Quilt,	1.00
Mrs. Anne Hunter, best Cotton Socks,	1.00
Mrs. Ruth Riley, best Woolen Stockings,	1.00
Fruit.	
Justin Hamilton, best lot of Apples,	1.00
same best lot of Pears,	1.00

1859-1866

No Mercer County Fair was held in 1859. In fact, no Mercer County Fair was held between the years of 1856 and 1867, due to a lack of interest. Also, during the years, 1861-1865, the *Civil War* was taking place, and peoples' concerns were with the war, not the Fair.

1867

The Agricultural Society was revived. They made a big push for membership with hopes of holding an annual County Fair. (*Western Standard*; July 26, 1867)

1868

The Agricultural Society, after a long lapse, announced that they planned to hold "*The First Annual Mercer County Fair*," on October 14, 15, and 16. The Fair was to be held in the beautiful grove, adjoining the Reservoir, at Celina, Ohio. The Officers of the Society were President J. Broadwell, Vice President Adams Jewett, Treasurer Abner Davis, Secretary S.F. DeFord, Marshall J. N. Hetzler, and Managers John Fleck, William Lacey, Ed Piper, Henry Doner, J. Shellabarger, J. M. Hussey, George Myers, and Joseph Reidhart. (*Western Standard*; September 24, 1868)

About a month later a list of premiums awarded was printed with the following explanation from the editor: "*In accordance with the instructions I herewith submit a report of premiums awarded at the recent October Fair. The report has been unduly delayed, owing to the various causes, one of which is the unsettled condition of the company.*" The newspaper had changed hands. (*Mercer County Standard*, Celina, Ohio; November 19, 1868)

1869

There was an ad in each newspaper, starting on September 23, 1869, announcing that "*The Mercer County Agricultural Society will hold its Second Annual Fair on October 13, 14, and 15.*" (*Mercer County Standard*, September 23, 1869)

A later newspaper listed the following, in regards to the *Second Annual Exhibition*. *Fair was a great success. Feared the weather seeing it was held so late, but weather was fine and roads were good. Not as many entries as anticipated. People not accustomed to Fair yet, and are timid about placing their products in exhibition. There should have been more stock. The display of farm utensils was excellent. The display of farm and garden products, fruits, etc., was a success. The last afternoon the trial of speed in horses attracted the most universal attention. Financially the Fair was a great success. They lost money the first year, but now paid all debts and has a surplus for the next year.* (*Mercer County Standard*; October 21, 1869)

The following page is a list of Premiums from the November 19, 1868 *Mercer County Standard*, A. P. J. Snyder, Publisher and Proprietor. This list illustrates the efforts put into the Mercer County Fair in 1868, considering no Fair was held in the years 1856-1867. From 1852 until 2002, the newspaper in Celina faithfully carried articles about the Mercer County Fair, which made a major contribution to the preservation of the history of the Mercer County Fair, as well as the history of Mercer County Communities. Newspapers are noted for providing daily up-to-date history lessons.

1870

One newspaper article had the heading, "*The Coming County Fair.*" *Let our farmers go to work and make the preparations to have their farms represented. Let all join to make the Fair a grand farmer's jubilee and reunion of friends and acquaintances. Send something no matter how small or how large.* In that same newspaper was the article with the heading, "*Is it Fair.*" *Our Agricultural Board expects us to puff them through our columns for nothing, but when a job of printing is to be done they give it to a man who knows nothing about the business because he offers starvation prices. He has done the work in such a bungling manner that it is a disgrace to the printing profession.* Ed. (Mercer County Standard; September 8, 1870) [The above article was written by the editor of the Mercer County Standard, about the editor of another local newspaper.]

1871

The newspaper ad announced, *The Fourth Annual Fair of the Mercer County Agricultural Society to be held on the grounds of the Society on September 20, 21, and 22. The premium amount to be \$1000.* The Society officers were President G. W. Raudabaugh, Vice President F. M. Piper, Secretary John Milligan, and Treasurer Abner Davis. There was over a two column premium list ranging from fifty cents to five dollars. (Mercer County Standard; August 31, 1871)

1872

The local paper had one advertisement promoting the Fair. *The Mercer County Fair will be held on the Beautiful Grounds, Near Celina on September 18, 19, and 20. Come everybody; and bring along articles for exhibition. One and all should lend their aid toward making this the best and most attractive Fair ever.* (Mercer County Standard; September 12, 1872)

In February 1872 the Agricultural Society purchased the tract of land of 17 or 18 acres, by the Reservoir, "Lake Mercer," as it was called at that time, from the state of Ohio, and the annual Fairs were held there. That site would be the site of the Mercelina Park in 2002. (See the 1876 and 1888 maps of Celina.)

1873

The 6th Annual Fair of the Mercer County Agricultural Society, will be held on the Fair Grounds on October 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. The Society is now in such a condition—financially and otherwise—as, to warrant us saying that this Fair is bound to eclipse all proceeding ones. (Mercer County Standard; October 9, 1873)

The Fair held last week was the greatest success of any ever held in the county. Great credit is due the managers, for the interest they took in trying to make the Fair what it was—the best ever held in the county. (Mercer County Standard; October 9, 1873)

1874

The Fair of Mercer County commences on September 16, 17, and 18. This above all others, has been the most propitious season, and we have been blessed with such crops, of all kinds, as never before, in this county, gladdened the hearts of our husbandmen. Then what would be more appropriate and proper than for people, each and everyone, to bring choice specimens as an offering to Ceres, the goddess of plenty. (Mercer County Standard; August 13, 1874)

1875

The ad in the local paper stated, *Eighth Annual Fair of the Mercer County Agricultural Society to be held on the Fair Grounds on September 29, 30, and October 1.* The Officers listed were President William Lacey, Vice President Calvin E. Riley, Secretary S. S. Scranton, and Treasurer Calvin E. Riley. Premiums ranged from 50 cents to 20 dollars for double team trotting (both horses owned by the same party) and 50 dollars paid to the fastest trotting horse, mare or gelding. (*Mercer County Standard*; August 6, 1875)

1876

"The Fair." We took the pains to interview a number of farmers from different parts of the county on the subject of the Fair. The Secretary of the Society informs us that more entries are made, than the total number of entries at any former Fair. The Premium Sheet is very comprehensive, and large premiums are offered. These premiums will be paid, because the Fair will be a financial success. Again, we say, "Let every farmer come and take that interest in the Fair which he should." The Fair is the farmers, gotten up expressly for his benefit, and should have his encouragement. The Fair will be held on the 19th, 20th, 21st, and 22nd days of September. (*Mercer County Standard*; August 24, 1876)

[Note: This was the first time the Fair was expanded to four days.]

1877

"Our County Fair." Farmers of Mercer County, are you aware that the County Fair commences one week from next Tuesday? On you depends it success. Prepare your articles for exhibition, and do not delay too long. Get your finest stock in trim. Have your choicest and finest vegetables ready for the occasion. See to it that the Fair which commences on September 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st, is a success. Premiums will range from 50 cents to \$6.00 for the best cow, best cow with calf by her side, best 1 year old bull, and best 3 year old bull. (*Mercer County Standard*; September 6, 1877).

The Ohio Revised Code provides the laws of Ohio, under which the Mercer County Fair exists. Ohio's legal system provides the structure by which the Citizens of Ohio live.

HOUSE BILL 463, passed April 8, 1880, AN ACT

To authorize the commissioners of Mercer County to sell certain real estate, and to direct how the proceeds are to be applied.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio,* That the commissioners of Mercer County, Ohio, are hereby authorized and empowered to sell at public or private sale, in whole or in parcels, and on payments not exceeding two years, and to execute good and sufficient deeds of conveyance therefore, the following described real estate, situated in said county of Mercer: All that portion of the west half of the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of section one (1) that lies north of the center of the **Celina and New Corydon Road**, and a strip of land 66-100 chains wide off the west side of that part of the east half of the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of section one (1), that lies north of said **Celina and New Corydon Road**, all in town six (6), south of range two (2) east, containing in all twenty acres of land, more or less, and apply the proceeds arising from said sale in acquiring title to, and paying indebtedness upon the grounds **now used and occupied by the Mercer County Agricultural Society as a fair ground.**

And after paying in full for said last mentioned grounds, it shall be the duty of the treasurer of said county to pay to the treasurer of said agricultural Society, on the order of the auditor of said county, the residue of said proceeds to be used by said society in improving said grounds. Said grounds to be owned and controlled as provided in section four (4) of an act entitled "*an act for the relief of the Mercer County Agricultural Society*," passed May 5, 1877. (O. L., vol. 74, page 508.)

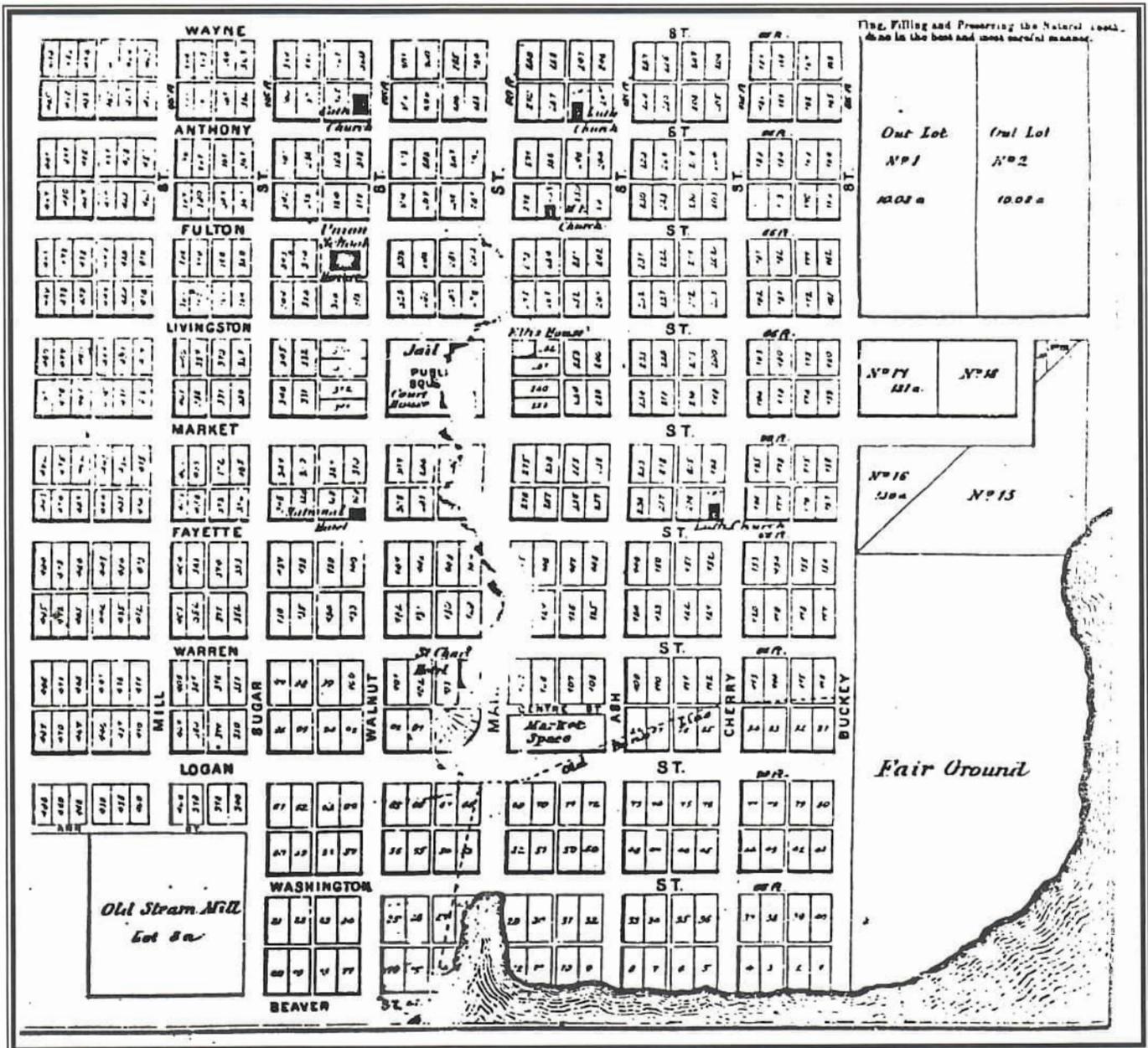
SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Thos. A. Cowgill, *Speaker of the House of Representatives*

R. G. Richards, *President pro tem of the Senate.*

Passed April 8, 1880.

**Peter R. Van Arsdel &
Matthew L. Gilmore, Attorneys at Law** Sponsors



1876 Map of Celina, Ohio. Note the Fair Grounds.

Note the plans of Celina, and compare the community development between 1876 and 2002. In 1876, our Nation celebrated its 100th Anniversary. In 2002, the Mercer County Fair celebrates its 150th Anniversary. In 2003, Ohio will celebrate her 200th Anniversary. Progress is a part of our country. The Celina "Market Space" is located on Logan Street, between Main, Ash, and Center Streets. The Mercer County Court House and Jail are located on the Public Square, on Main Street between Market and Livingston. The Ellis House is on Main and Livingston. The National Hotel is on the north west corner of Fayette and Walnut. The St. Charles Hotel is on the south west corner of Main and Warren. The Union School in on the south west corner of Fulton and Walnut. Three Lutheran Churches and one Methodist Church are also marked. The "old Steam Mill" is located on Sugar, south of Logan Street.

Mercer Co. Community Development

Larry Stelzer, Director

Sponsor

1878

In June 1878, the Mercer County Agricultural Society purchased 21.32 acres of land from the Brandon heirs for \$1900, on the west wide of Celina, foreseeing the necessity of more ample grounds. This site is the 2002 site of the Mercer County Fair Ground on West Market Street, just west of Riley Street.

“Our Coming Fair.” That great good from the holding of our annual County Fair, is no longer a debatable question; for it is conceded by all intelligent and observing persons that the comparison of products, the different methods of producing, and the interchange of ideas and experiences brought about through these yearly meetings, are in the result beneficial. All of the elements material necessary to make a tip top fair are at hand. All that is required is the disposition and a little effort, and the thing is done and the Mercer County Fair to be held September 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th, will be a success, and will be remembered in the future and referred to as a model of its kind. (Mercer County Standard; August 29, 1878)

1879

“Proceedings of the Agricultural board.” Board met in regular session. All members present except D. S. Roop. Contacts for rent of stands presented by Secretary and approved by the Board. On motion, Wm. Lacey was elected Marshall and Geo. Mowry, assistant. P. M. Betts was elected gate-keeper and Alex Partner, assistant; W. H. Parrott and J. C. Toppert, police for Vegetable Hall; McBaily, police for Floral Hall; B. W. Powell, Eph Grunden, Chas. McGee, M. Newcomb and M. Burress, grounds police. It was signed by T. J. Godfrey, President; W. F. McDaniel, Secretary, and dated September 6, 1879. The Fair was held September 23, 24, 25, and 26. (Mercer County Standard; September 11, 1879)

“Twelfth Annual Fair.” The Mercer County Fair held last week was in every way a success, and the Agricultural Society is now in such a condition as to be the pride of our people. The arrangements on the grounds were good. There was no disturbance of any kind. The managers were vigilant and efficient, and were fortunate in their selection of gatekeepers, marshals, and policemen. (Mercer County Standard; October 2, 1879)

1880

The Mercer County Fair was to be held on September 15, 16, 17 & 18. No other information was to be found in the local newspapers.

1881

The 14th Annual Fair of the Mercer County Agricultural Society will be held on the Fair Grounds at Celina, Ohio on September 21, 22, 23, and 24. The Society Officers were President Honorable T. J. Godfrey, Vice President D. J. Roop; Secretary J. H. Beam, and Treasurer D. J. Roop. Premiums ranged from 50 cents to \$25 for the best stallion, four years old and over. (Mercer County Standard; August 11, 1881) This was the first official advertisement for the Fair since 1876.

The progress of the Mercer County Fair is a reflection of the progress of the communities in Mercer County. Mercer Countians take civic pride in contributing to the betterment of Mercer County.

1882

The annual meeting of the Mercer County Agricultural Society for the election of officers was held at the Mercer County Courthouse on Saturday, January 28, 1882. **A Grandstand to seat 1500 persons comfortable was put up at the Fair Grounds.** *All persons in the stands would have a good view of the races, as well as the whole grounds.* (Mercer County Standard; August 18, 1882)

"The County Fair! Announcement." The last three days of the County Fair we will issue a Daily paper. Advertisers will please make a note of this enterprise. (Mercer County Standard; August 14, 1882)

[Note: The Fair was held on September 13, 14, 15 and 16. Nothing more was found advertising the Fair or any results of events.]

1883

The Mercer County Fair was held on September 12, 13, 14, and 15, 1883.

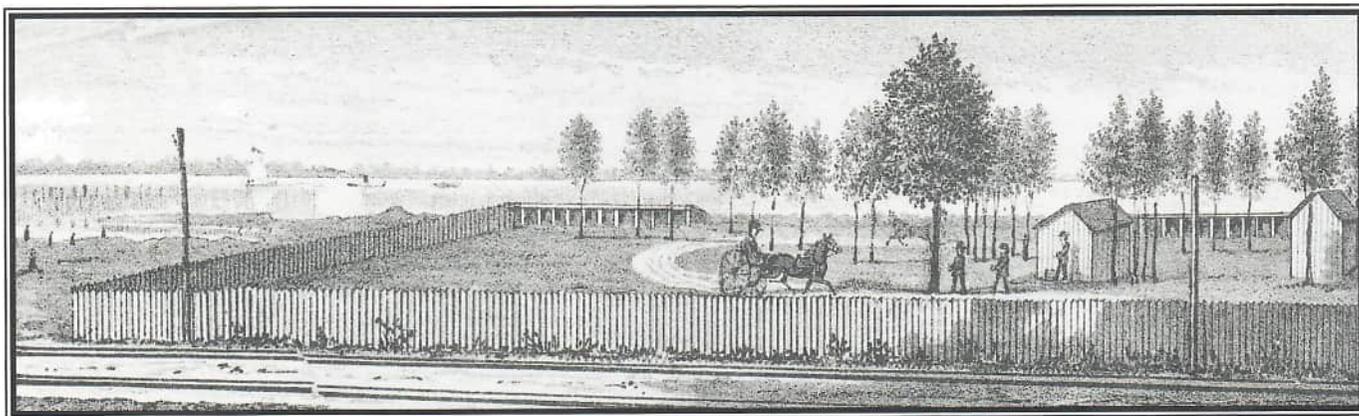
"The Fair." The Sixteenth Annual Fair different from its predecessors by having better exhibits than it has ever had, and by having better weather than has been known for many years. Various kinds of games deprived the unwary of their reason and their money. (Mercer County Standard; September 20, 1883)

[The Newspaper Editor went on to question whether this kind of entertainment was really necessary.]

1884

A Spacious Hall on the Fair Grounds is being pushed rapidly forward toward its completion.

There will be excellent racing at the County Fair next month. (Mercer County Standard; August 7, 1884)
Fair held on September 2, 3, 4, & 5. For four consecutive days last week public interest was centered in the Fair and from early Tuesday morning until late Friday night our beautiful Fair Grounds was filled with a vast number of sight seers. The spacious new exhibition hall and recently erected amphitheater proved to be highly attractive. A great interest was manifested in our fair by merchants this year and a number of attractive exhibits attested to this. (Mercer County Standard; September 11, 1884)



In 1882, a Grandstand was constructed at the Fair Grounds located by the Lake. In 1896, the Grandstand was destroyed by fire. This pen and ink drawing is from the book Van Wert and Mercer Counties, Ohio History, edited by R. Sutton and printed at Wapakoneta, Ohio, in 1882. Local citizens marvel at this illustration of the Fair Grounds by the Lake in Celina.

The Willow Restaurant Sponsor

1885

The Mercer County Fair was held on September 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12, 1885. *The Fair opened under unfavorable circumstances, the rain coming down in torrents. The bad weather continued. On account of the heavy rains, the Fair was continued an extra day over Saturday.* (Mercer County Standard; September 17, 1885)

1886

The Mercer County Fair was held on August 31, September 1, 2, & 3, 1886. *"The Fair." It always produces within us a feeling of keenest delight. Truth and candor compel us to say that the 19th Annual Fair was not a great and grand success. Let it suffice that there was deep and dire discontent with the state of affairs in general and the family ticket business in particular and that everybody seemed disposed to rumble at the management.* (Mercer County Standard; September 9, 1886)

1887

The Fair was held on September 20, 21, 22, and 23. By that time, it was a very well known and popular event. The railroads also cooperated as was pointed out in the local paper. *"Excursion Rates to the Mercer County Fair." All railroads will give reduced rates to Celina and return. The Mackinaw (Cincinnati, Jackson & Mackinaw Railroad, C J & M) has been very liberal. The following are its rates for round trip to Celina; each lasts 3 days at the Fair: Shanes Crossing and St. Henry, 15 cents; Coldwater and Tamah, 10 cents.* (Mercer County Standard; September 16, 1887)

1888

"The Fair." The Fair was successful from the beginning to end. The machinery on the Fair Grounds was run by natural gas. The Mendon Band furnished excellent music all during the Fair. The merry-go-round and the medicine men took in hundreds of dollars. The crowds on Tuesday was a wonder, but Thursday's attendance eclipsed it. The baseball game on Thursday attracted a crowd of enthusiastic spectators. (Mercer County Standard; October 4, 1888)

Oil wells were numerous on the Lake. However, in 1886, the first oil well in the Celina village limits, proved to be dry, with a slight trace of gas. A **Celina Gas Company** was installed to furnish the town with light and fuel for a number of years in 1886. In July of 1888, an ordinance was passed in Celina, to contract for the supply of natural gas to encourage manufacturers to locate in Celina. The winter of **1892/1893, a franchise to light the streets of Celina with electricity** was given to Turner and Lutz.

1889

"Card to Friends of Agriculture." I understand there has been circulated false statements in regard to our charges for stalls at our coming Fair. We charge \$1.00 for box stalls and 50 cents for open stalls to citizens of our County; \$2.00 for box stalls to parties outside the County. We hope that no one will object to these charges who wish to see the Agricultural Society prosper. H. B. Bennett, President. (Mercer County Standard; September 19, 1889) *"The Fair." The Van Wert County News said it was the 'thinnest' Mercer County Fair ever held, only 5 people in the Grandstand on Wednesday afternoon. [The Standard defended the Fair.] It was the best and most financially successful ever held. Over 8000 attended the Fair on Thursday.* (Mercer County Standard; October 9, 1889)

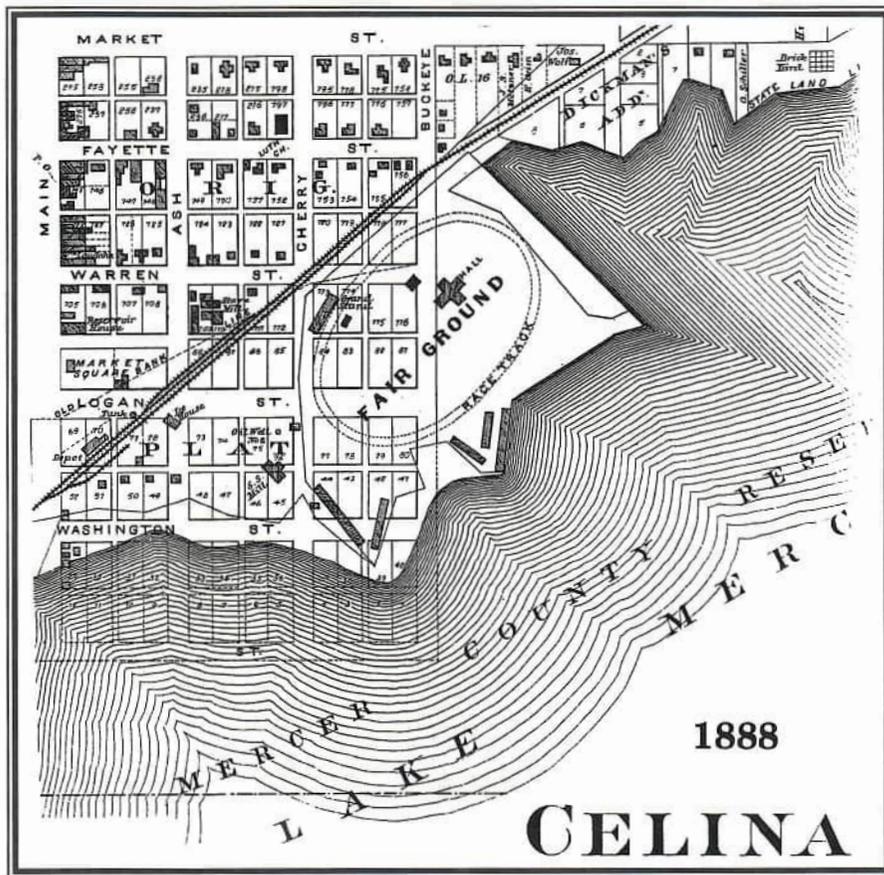
The Peoples Bank Co. Sponsor



The Band Stand stood on the old Fair Grounds by the Lake.



"Boat Landing at Fair Ground, Celina, Ohio"
 Oldest Post Card of the Fair Grounds by the Lake;
 the photograph was taken before 1894.



1888 Map of Celina, Ohio. Note the Fair Grounds.

The Mercer County Fair Ground, located south on Cherry and Buckeye Streets, and east of Logan and Warren Streets, next to the Mercer County Reservoir, Lake Mercer, is indicated on this 1888 Map of Celina. The 1882 Grand Stand is facing the Race Track. The Band Stand and the 1884 Agricultural Hall are within the Track. Mercer County, Ohio Atlas. Philadelphia, PA: Griffing, Gordon & Co. 1888.

Henkle Insurance Agency, Rockford, Ohio Sponsor

1890

[Note: Apparently, the Fair was really in financial trouble. Five men provided \$1850 so the Fair could be held in 1889. Lack of attendance seemed to be the main problem. There was a lot of discussion about not holding the Fair. They finally did decide to hold it on September 16, 17, 18, and 19. In order to promote attendance the Society eliminated the family ticket, and charged 25 cents for all over twelve years.]

The Agricultural Society hired *Professor Thompson, the most noted aeronaut of America to give a balloon ascension and parachute leap from the clouds in three successive days of the Fair.* (Mercer County Standard; September 4, 1890)

"The Fair." Owing to the uncertainty of there being a Fair up to within a short time before it was held, the farmers did not have time to make the exhibition of their products that they otherwise would have done. Consequently there was not much stock or farm products to be seen. It was a common remark among strangers that the races were the best that they had seen at any Fair this season. (Mercer County Standard; September 25, 1890)

1891

[Note: The Agricultural Society Board decided to move the Fair up one month in hopes to improve attendance and participation, so for the first time it was held in August on the 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th.] *"Mercer County Agricultural Society." The Board of Managers met at the Sheriff's office at 10:00 A.M. The rules were changed so that holders of family tickets be admitted with team during the Fair and the right to vote at the election on the third day of the Fair. Mr. Beam was allowed 9 dollars for six days labor fixing the track. Charles Halfhill, Secretary.* (Mercer County Standard; August 13, 1891)

1892

"We'll All Be There." This is the week when the denizens of the town and country alike give themselves to the mildly intoxicating delight of the County Fair. Over the Fair Grounds there will be grand pandemonium of band music, side show vociferations, cackling poultry, lowing cattle, and human voices. As the great annual attraction of our County, may its shadow never grow less. (Mercer County Standard; August 25, 1892) [Note: This was referred to as the "25th Annual Mercer County Fair." This goes back to the Agricultural Society reviving the Fair in 1868.]

1893

"The Mercer County Fair." Let everybody in the County take hold and make this the grandest and most successful event of the kind in the history of the Society. Make the Fair complete for we have assurances that the attendance will be unusually large. Come all of you, the short and the tall, the lean and the fat, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, male and female—everybody. (Mercer County Standard; August 3, 1893)

November 2, 1893, the Mercer County Agricultural Society purchased 18 acres of land from John W. DeFord for \$2700. This bordered the Brandon property that was purchased in 1878. The Fair Grounds was in excess of 39 acres, on Market Street, west of Riley Street, Celina. The Fair was growing, and the Fair Board and the Public always had a place for youth as well as adults.

Probate Juvenile Judge Mark Klosterman Sponsor

1894

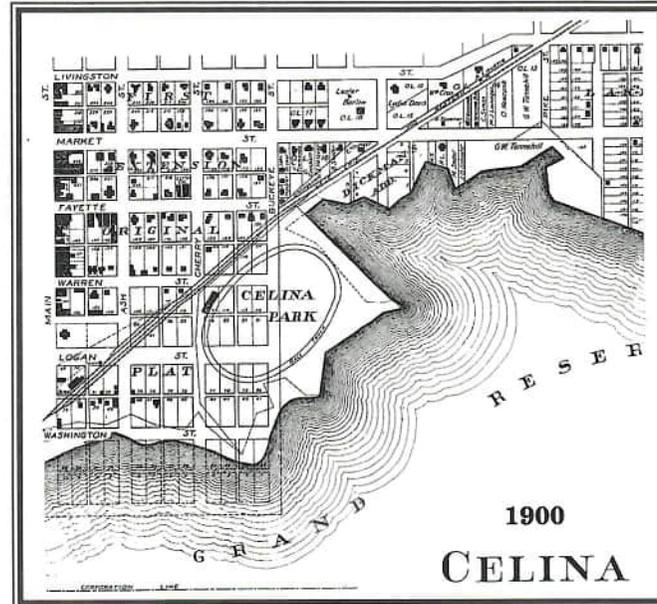
*"The Mercer County Fair: August 21-24." Will be a Boomer this year. Beautiful new grounds of 40 acres. Well shaded and watered, and equipped at an expense of \$25,000. (Mercer County Standard; August 9, 1894) [Note: This was the first large advertisement found in the local paper since the 1881 Fair. The same advertisement could be found in all County newspapers. **In 1894, this was the first Fair held at the present Fairgrounds Site, on Market Street, still in use in 2002.** The old Fair Grounds, located by the lake, became the location of the Celina Chautauqua Assembly, at the Mercelina Park.]*

1895

"Editorial Notes" The Fair is on exhibition for the people and by the people, and all people should attend. The exhibits for our zeal for knowledge. The Fair is not a school room hemmed in by four walls. No other county of Ohio boasts of a similar institution as our Fair. The livestock feature of our Fair is always a popular one. We aim to excel any and all farmer exhibitions. The Fair we hold is devoted to the interests of the community in which you live. The word agriculture is broad in its meaning and includes everything growing from the soil. (Mercer County Standard; August 10, 1898)

1896

"Destruction of the Grand Stand." The Grand Stand at the old Fairgrounds (on the North Shore of the Reservoir in Celina) was destroyed by fire Tuesday night. The building was evidently set on fire, either by tramps or by some one who wanted the excitement of a conflagration. In it were stored a Ferris Wheel valued at \$400, the property of Jno. Hamburger. Some twenty boats belonging to Ed. C. Snyder also went up in smoke. The destruction of the Grand Stand, almost the last trace of the buildings on the old Fair Grounds have been removed. (Mercer County Standard; February 1, 1896)
The Grand Stand had been constructed in 1882.



1900 Map of Celina, Ohio. Note the Fair Grounds.

Map of Celina, from 1900 Mercer County Atlas. Notice "Celina Park," at the site of the old Mercer County Fair Grounds. (The 1900 site of the Celina Park is Mercelina Park in 2002.) Note the road has been changed along Lake Shore Drive, past Pullman Bay, crossing the Lake Erie & Western Railroad Tracks to Market Street.

**Celina Wine Store &
Pullman Bay Restaurant** Sponsors



C. W. Halfhill & President & Mrs. Harding



A PIONEER HOME AT FAIR GROUNDS

The only United States President to visit the Mercer County Banner Fair was W. G. Harding. Charles W. Halfhill, who served as Secretary to the Agricultural Society in the 1890's, often sought advice from his good Republican friend and newspaper editor Warren Gamaliel Harding. Harding was nominated for Lieutenant Governor of Ohio in 1903. In 1910, he was defeated in the election for Ohio Governor. Harding was nominated for United States President in the 1920 election. August 2, 1923 President Warren G. Harding died suddenly at San Francisco, when he returned from a visit to Alaska.

A Pioneer Home was built at the Mercer County Fairgrounds. The Mercer County Pioneer Association held its first meeting at Moore's Grove at Mendon in 1882. They held their annual meetings there until they moved to Celina in 1894. In 1896, they met at the large tent on the Fair Grounds and decided to erect an old fashioned pioneer cabin on the Fair Grounds, and furnish it.

1897

"The County Fair." The County Fair will be a record breaker this year. Celina has come into prominence of late years as the Banner Fair Town of the State. Everybody has caught the Fair enthusiasm this year. All children under 14 years of age will be admitted free on Friday, the last day. The Fair will be held on August 18, 19, 20, & 21. (Mercer County Standard; August 8, 1897)

[Note: This was the first time that the local Fair was referred to as a "Banner" Fair.]

"How the Fair is Advertised." Some people have seen fit to criticize the management of the Fair in regard to its place of advertising. We have not bought a lot of gilt edged and high priced advertising matter to adorn the walls of private houses and be framed rather than displayed for the benefit of the public. Two thousand premium lists have been sent out; six thousand speed programs have been mailed to the different horsemen in Ohio and Indiana, and one thousand invitations sent to prominent citizens of the county. At any rate don't stay away from the Fair. S. H. Weaver, President. (Mercer County Standard; August 11, 1897) One of the 1897 ticket premiums can be found in the Mercer County Historical Museum. It reads, *The Banner Fair of Ohio; Celina, Ohio; August 17, 18, 19, & 20, 1897. First Premium. Premium Payable after August 21 on presentation of this card. Awarded on #1 Bany Washer, Class No. 44. Entry No. 14. Signed by J. W. Swartz, Superintendent. (The Bany Washing Machine was built at St. Henry, in the 1890's, until Jacob Bany moved the business to Delphos in 1907.)*

Common Pleas Judge Jeffrey R. Ingraham Sponsor

1898

"Fair Board Meeting." At the July 18 meeting of the Fair Board it was stated that the committee on water reported having made satisfactory contract with the water works board and that the line was to be completed to the Fair Grounds by August 1st. The selection of help was made; G. H. Houser was chosen chief of police at \$3.00 per day. Bids for printing 10,000 copies of the "Exhibitor," (special Fair page) was awarded to the Standard office which outbid the Observer office, \$59.00 to \$72.00. (Mercer County Standard; July 23, 1898)

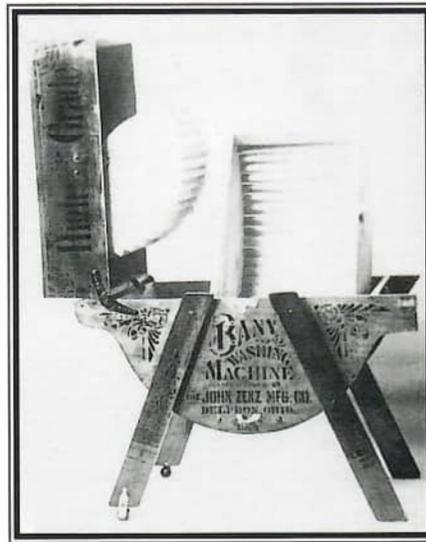
"The Banner Fair." Our Heroes will not be in attendance at the Fair. But everyone else will be in Celina, Ohio on August 16, 17, 18, & 19, 1898. (Mercer County Standard; July 23, 1898)

[Note: The above was written under pictures of President McKinley, General Miles, Admiral Sampson, Admiral Dewey, Commodore Schlev, General Shafter, and Captain Sigsbee. These were the leaders of the United States involved in the Spanish American War. Our shortest war ever was fought in the Spanish American War, 1898-1900. The Fair Board began to put full page ads in the local newspapers and was reported to be the largest Fair ever held in Mercer County.]

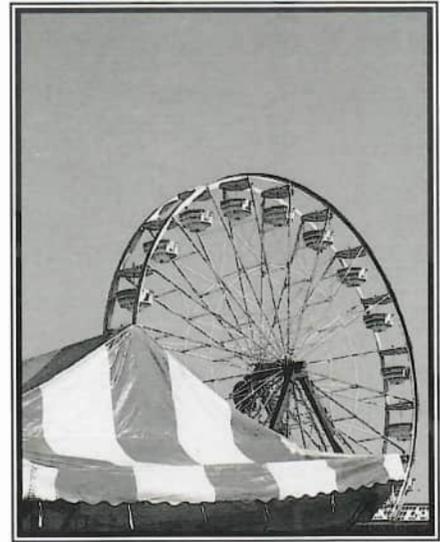
The Poster advertising the Mercer County Fair, as well as patriotically remembering the Spanish American War, 1898-1900, is on exhibit at the Mercer County Historical Museum, 130 East Market, Celina, Ohio.



The Poster of Mercer County Fair during the Spanish American War has a patriotic theme.



Bany Washing Machine Made at St. Henry, Ohio, 1897 Premium for Fair



The Ferris Wheel could be found at almost every county fair of Ohio. George Ferris, inventor of the Ferris Wheel, died in 1897.

Schockman Lumber Company Sponsor

1899

“Fair Board Meeting.” The object of the meeting being to employ help and arrange for the coming Fair, they proceeded to employ the following bands and fixing their compensation at \$15.00 per day; Wednesday—Coldwater; Thursday—Neptune, and Friday—Montezuma. The following help was employed: Chief of Police, G. H. Houser, \$3.00 per day; Assistant Chief Ben Miller, \$2.00 per day; Ticket Sellers, \$1.50 per day, and Gate Keepers, \$2.00 per day. The printing of 1,000 editions of the Exhibitor, the bids were Standard, \$75, and Observer, \$70. Contract was awarded to the Observer. (Mercer County Standard; July 26, 1899)

[Note: This was the first year that the Fair was expanded to 5 days: August 21, 22, 23, 24, & 25.]

1900

House Bill No. 289. *The Board of County Commissioners was authorized to provide for the purchase of additional lands to the Fair Grounds, and to replace buildings destroyed by fire, and improve the present Fair Grounds. The Commissioners were authorized to issue and sell coupon bonds of Mercer County to an amount not in excess of \$7,000. This would be paid off over a period of ten years, and the interest rate was not to exceed four percent. This bid was signed by J. B. Snyder, speaker pro tem of the House of Representatives and O. Shepard, President pro tem of the Senate on March 8, 1900.*

“Fair Managers.” President S. H. Weaver announced that 5 additional acres were purchased for hitching racks. The matter of the building of an additional grandstand or an extension of the water works plant was freely discussed and the latter agreed on by the Board. Nine were destroyed by fire last fall. The new buildings are larger and better spaced. (Mercer County Standard; July 11, 1900)

[Note: This was the second 5 day Fair, held on August 20-24. The attendance was estimated at 40,000.]
Nothing was mentioned about fire insurance, in this newspaper article.]

HOUSE BILL NO. 289 AN ACT

To authorize the county commissioners of Mercer County, Ohio, to provide funds to replace buildings destroyed by fire, purchase additional land and improve the same, and make improvements on the Mercer County Fair Grounds.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio:

SECTION 1. That the board of county commissioners of Mercer County, Ohio, be and are hereby authorized to **provide for the purchase of and to purchase for and on behalf of said county additional lands in the vicinity of the present fair grounds, and to provide means to replace buildings destroyed by fire, and improve the present fair grounds.** The title to any and all such lands shall be conveyed to and vest in the board of county commissioners of Mercer County.

SECTION 2. Said board of county commissioners, for the purpose of providing the necessary means to pay for, and improve said lands, and replace said buildings, are hereby authorized to issue and sell the coupon bonds of said county, to an amount not in excess of seven thousand dollars (\$7,000), payable at such place and at such time or times, bearing such rate of interest not exceeding four per cent, per annum, payable semi-annually as said board of county commissioners may determine, and said bonds shall not be sold for less than their par value and accrued interest and shall be signed by said county commissioners and attested by the auditor of said county, and shall have the seal of said county affixed thereto.

SECTION 3. Said board of county commissioners are hereby authorized to annually levy on all taxable property of said county such tax in addition to other taxes, as will be necessary to provide a fund for the prompt payment of said bonds and interest as the same shall become due and payable.

SECTION 4. Said board of county commissioners are hereby authorized to permit the use and occupation of said grounds and improvements herein authorized to be purchased and constructed, by said **County Agricultural Society** of said county, for holding and conducting its county fairs, thereon, under the same arrangements, terms and conditions as the present fair grounds and improvements used and occupied by the said **County Agricultural Society** are held.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect on its passage.

J. B. SNYDER, *Speaker pro tem, of the House of Representative*

O. SHEPPARD, *President pro tem of the Senate*

Passed March 8, 1900.



Bob Nuding – State Farm Insurance Sponsor

1901

Fair Board Secretary C. S. Halfhill listed 20 reasons in the Standard why the local Fair was the best. Some of them were: *We admit women and children free on August 21 (the 3rd day). We have always paid premiums in full. We have the best equipped County Fair Grounds in Ohio. We have three good railroads entering Celina. We do not allow gambling or immoral shows on the Grounds. Our Fair is in touch with the farmers.* (Mercer County Standard; August 8, 1901)

The local paper carried the following advertisement: *Mercer County Banner Fair, August 19-23. Special Excursion Trains as far away as Cincinnati. Family tickets - \$1.00. See the Melroses—Great Aerial Bicyclists—wonderful high-wire riders. The Educational Department will be one of the great attractions under the management of Mr. L. N. Kraner.* (Mercer County Standard; August 8, 1901)

1902

“Banner Fair.” *It is no small matter to manage so colossal an affair as the Fair of Mercer County has grown to be in late years. The God of the Harvests has been pleased to bless this fair land of ours with golden plenty in the way of abundant crops. Good purses will assure good races, the track as usual will be in flawless condition. Then there will be music and shows and good things to eat, and a host of attractions. Give yourself and your family the best and biggest holiday of their lives.* (Mercer County Standard; August 7, 1902) In 2002, a Member of the Fair Board has, in her collection, a card: “Complimentary Pass to the Banner Fair, Celina, August 18 to 22, 1902, for a man and “his lady,” signed by C.F. Kruger, President and Fred Heiby, Secretary.”

[Note: There was no mention any place that this was the 50th Anniversary of the first fair held in 1852. It was referred to as the 35th annual Fair starting with the 1868 Fair. It was reported that the 1902 Fair did break all attendance records.]

Constitution of the Mercer County Agricultural Society*

- Article 1. This organization shall be known as the Mercer County Agricultural Society.
- Article 2. The object of this society will be the improvement of agricultural and horticultural productions, educational science, useful domesticated animals, domestic manufactures and the mechanical arts.
- Article 3. Every citizen of the county of the age of 21 years or over, who shall pay annually \$1.00 to the treasurer of the society, on or prior to the last day of the fair, shall be a member of the society.
- Article 4. The affairs of the society shall be managed and directed by a board of fifteen directors, whose terms of service shall be two years and whose compensation shall not exceed \$2.00 per day of actual service. Seven of said board shall constitute a quorum to do business. Candidates for members must be members of the society.
- Article 5. (As amended). On the last day of the fair, annually, an election shall be held to elect one-half the members of the board of directors mentioned in Article four, the polls opening at 12 M. standard time, and closing at 4 P.M. Voting will be by ballots, which will be furnished by the Society and contain the names of the persons to be voted for. Only *bona fide* members of the society will be entitled to vote. The board shall elect two clerks and two judges from its membership. Candidates for membership on the board may have their names placed on the official ballots by handing to the secretary by 6 o'clock P.M., on the second day of the fair, a written request, signed by five members of the Society. Official ballots only will be counted.

* Scranton, S. S. Editor. History of Mercer County, Ohio. Chicago, IL: Biographical Pub. Co. 1907. Pages 63-64.

**Barbara Pierce, Fair Board Member,
Midway Vendor Committee Sponsor**

The Second Fifty Years: 1903-1952



1903

"Races." The only disappointing feature of the 1903 Banner Fair was the races. On the streets, evenings during the fair, the principle topic of conversation was the indifference showed by those in charge of the races. The small number of entries and the poor quality of horses made the contests positively tiresome. Someone is at fault for the deplorable state of affairs. Levi Young disclaims the responsibility and claims he had nothing to do with the entries or the races. A county fair without good races is like Hamlet with Hamlet out of the cast. People tire of the exhibits and seek the excitement of the race course. The public was disappointed last year and again this year. As in the past, the same old promises are made that next year will be a change, but the change never takes place. (Mercer County Standard; August 8, 1903)

1904

"By Way of Remarks." Nobody goes hungry down the pike, provided he has the money. The mule race is advertised to close today's proceedings. Race horses and eating stands were the biggest revenue raiser for the Fair Board this year. Taken as a whole it is a big fair. But then, it always is. That is why it is called The Banner Fair. Get your fortune told. There is a real Zigara on the grounds. Today, Thursday, the crowd is very large, and the people are coming in by the hundreds on every train. (Mercer County Standard; August 19, 1904)

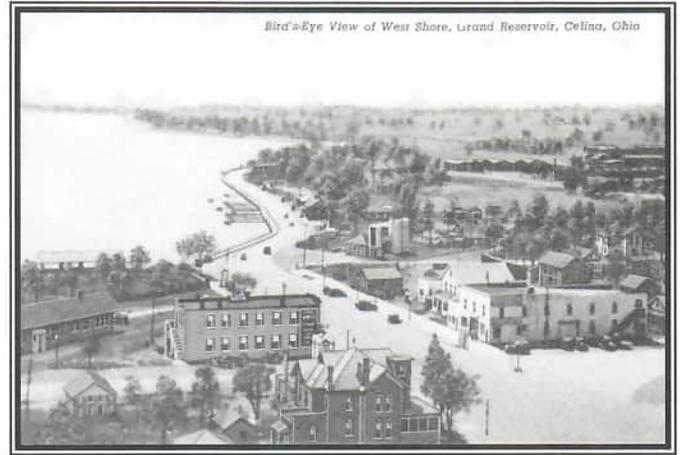
The 1904 *Mercer County Directory*, in Celina, noted Joseph Shannon, brick mason, old Fair Ground. The newspapers noted that local citizens were visiting the World's Fair at St. Louis in 1904.

1905

"Change." A special meeting of the Fair Board was held here today to consider the advisability of substituting the old popular family ticket for the membership ticket that had been adopted by the Board. Many protest against the changes that have been made by the citizenship of the county, and it was apparent that the attendance at the Fair would fall off greatly if this point was not yielded by the Board. By a majority vote the question of substituting the \$1.00 Family Ticket for the Membership Ticket carried. (Mercer County Observer; August 18, 1905) [Note: The Fair Board must have been under a lot of pressure to make this change only 4 days before the Fair which was held August 21-25.]

In 1905, the Celina Chautauqua Assembly held its first session at the site of the Old Fair Grounds. Three Time Presidential Candidate William Jennings Bryan spoke at this Celina Chautauqua.

Weldtec-Ltd. Sponsor



“The trains have done a rush business to Celina during the Banner Fair. Thursday, the Western Ohio Trolley ran three cars every four hours and the people were pushed into them like sheep.”

1906

“Banner Fair Closes Today.” The biggest and best Banner Fair ever held in Mercer County came to an end today. The Fair has been in every particular a record breaker. The midway was crowded, so were the shows, so were the grounds. The receipts for single admissions and at the grandstand Thursday reached nearly two thousand dollars. The pick pocket got in his work in Thursday’s dense crowd. The railroads have done a rush business to Celina during the Banner Fair. Thursday, the Western Ohio ran three cars every four hours and the people were pushed into them like sheep. (Mercer County Standard: August 24, 1906)

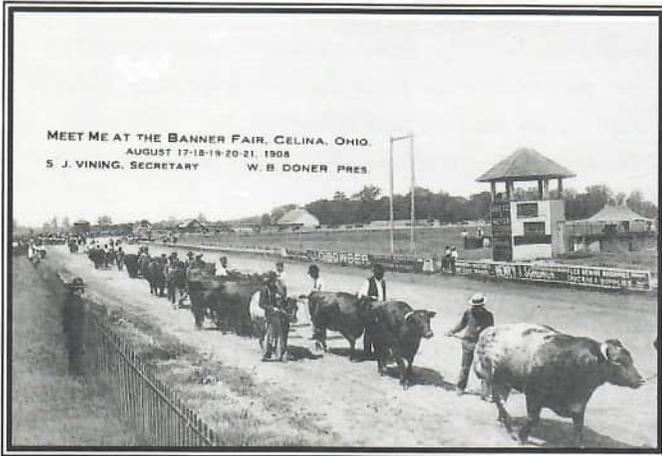
Celina’s streets were being paved with brick at this time: Fayette Street in 1902; Livingston in 1903; Walnut and East Market in 1904; Main Street in 1905, and West Market in 1906.

1907

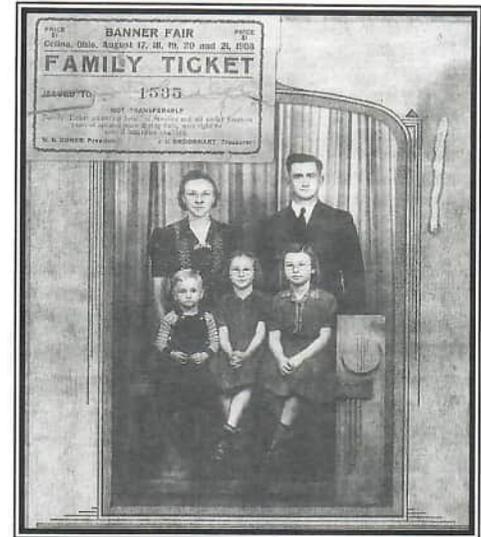
“Crowd and Track Record alike Broken.” Eighteen thousand people, perhaps a few more or less, passed through the gates of the Banner Fair Wednesday. Old Soldiers’ Day brought a tremendous crowd and it proved the biggest drawing card ever attempted by the fair management. The facing events were first class and gave general satisfaction. Thursday was the breaking of the track record held by Dick Wright for twelve years. The record attendance was also broken when a crowd of 25,000 passed through the gates on Thursday. By 2:00 o’clock Thursday the gate receipts showed an increase of \$1200 over any preceding year. The pickpockets got in a lot of work. One man took \$200 to the fair and they speedily relieved him of the entire sum. (Mercer County Standard; August 23, 1907)

A new Carnegie Library was built in Celina in 1907; and later became the Mercer County District Library.

**Mercer County Clerk of Courts James J. Highley
Mercer Co. Prosecuting Attorney, Andrew J. Hinders
Sponsors**



The Stock Parade. "Meet me at the Banner Fair, Celina, Ohio August 17-18-19-20-21, 1908. S. Vining, Secretary; W. B. Doner, President."



*VanTilburg Family Ticket, 1908
Ralph & Alice VanTilburg,
Norman, Joan, & Jennelle, late 1940's.*

1908

"Old Soldiers." The Banner Fair on Wednesday, August 19, will be a great gala day for veterans. The Courtesy extended to the veterans by the managers of the Banner Fair is one that meets with ready appreciation and the custom inaugurated here by Secretary Vining is fast being adopted by the fairs throughout the country. The soldiers will all be right royally welcomed on Wednesday next and every effort will be made by the Banner Fair management to make the day as pleasurable as possible. (Mercer County Standard; August 14, 1908)

The 1908 Officers and Board of Managers of the Mercer County Agricultural Society were as follows: President W.B. Doner, Celina; Vice President L. D. Brumm, Celina; Secretary S.J. Vining, Celina; Treasurer J.C. Brookhart, Celina; and John Birkmeyer, Coldwater; John Chivington, Mercer; Irvin Hole, Montezuma; B.B. Wilson, Fort Recovery; T.W. Clark, Fort Recovery; Henry Beckman, St. Henry; Fred Heckman, Maria Stein; William Hamilton, Mendon; John Powell, Celina; Isaac Kiser, Celina; Sol Shock, Rockford. The 1908 Banner Fair was held August 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21.

1909

"Cock-A-Doodle-Do! Hear `Em Crow." Over one thousand chickens entered for the Banner Fair. Biggest exhibit ever seen. All soldiers, their wives and widows admitted free on Wednesday. It will be worth your time to take a walk out to the grounds Saturday or Sunday and see the working of what promises to be one of the largest fairs in Ohio. Never before in the history of the Banner Fair has there been so many first class speed horses, on the grounds. Matters could not be shaping up better than they are this year for the Banner Fair. Secretary Vining reports everything is favorable. (Mercer County Standard; August 13, 1909)

In 1909, World Champion Pacer Dan Patch visited Celina to promote the August 16-20 Mercer County Fair. In March 1902, Dan Patch sold for \$20,000, and in December sold for \$60,000. In 1903, he broke the world's record by pacing a mile in 1:59, only to break his own record in 1906, at 1:55. Dan Patch is recognized at the Indianapolis, Indiana State Museum, and on the computer's World Wide Website. Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower went to watch Dan Patch race!

**Cooper Farms Feed & Animal Production -Ft. Recovery
Cooper Farms Processing - St. Henry Sponsors**

1910

“Record Breaking Crowd Attends the Banner Fair on Thursday.” Ten Thousand single admission tickets were sold at the Banner Fair Thursday. No attempt was made to estimate the number of family tickets that admitted countless others. Put the crowd at 25,000 was one estimate from a conservative onlooker who was heard to admit he had been a fair goer all his life, but had never seen this big a crowd. People came in early to avoid the rush. They came on foot, by trolley, steam car, and automobiles. And then when the midway was jammed, the grandstand jammed, the grounds covered with people in every part, the long delayed rains descended and gave the fair comers a bit of a soaking. (Mercer County Standard; August 19, 1910)

Halley’s Comet was a topic of conversation in 1910. May 12, 1910, at 3:00 A.M. Thursday, people were aroused by their alarm clocks to view Halley’s comet. They stood out in the streets watching until the comet disappeared from view. In 2002, only the citizens in their nineties recall Halley’s Comet.

1911

“Monster Aggregation of Exhibits.” Shows and race horses now on fair grounds. Biggest fair materializing ever known in chronology of fair events. Everything full on the opening day and not room for all exhibitors. Tuesday Races; August 15, 2:30: Race purse, \$300, and Gents Road Race purse, \$100. (Daily Standard; August 14, 1911) “Banner Fair” Receipts for 1911 season show a surplus of almost two thousand dollars after all expenses have been paid.

<i>Receipts from all sources:</i>	<i>\$11,828.12</i>
<i>Expenditures to date:</i>	<i>9,886.04</i>
<i>Estimate Expenses unpaid:</i>	<i>500.00</i>
<i>Permanent improvements</i>	<i>600.00</i>
<i>Balance:</i>	<i>1,839.33</i>

(Daily Standard; August 24, 1911)

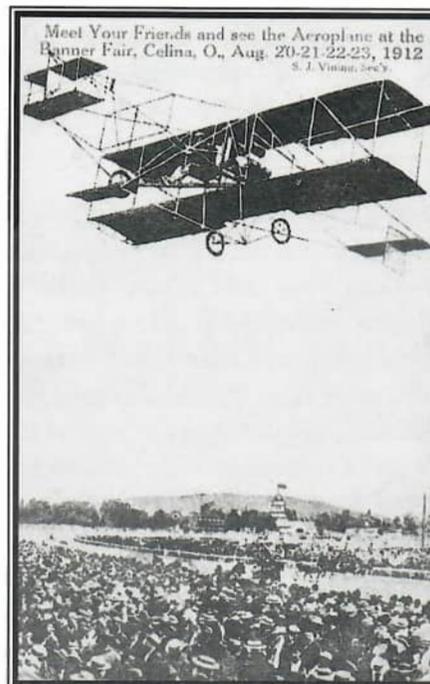
1912

“New Art Hall Completed” *The new art hall is now completed and other improvements are in place.* [In 1912, an Agricultural Hall was built at a cost of \$1,371.40, for the purpose of being an Art Hall. During the 1950’s the old Art Hall was deemed unsafe and was put to use by taking the top story off and moving it to a different area of the fairgrounds. It was converted into two horse stall barns.]

The aeroplane will be on the grounds Friday or Saturday. Many horse racers are now on the grounds and many more will be here. Do not forget the conditions of your family tickets. Again, I repeat them. That a family ticket will be furnished for \$1.00 admitting a man and wife and children under 12. They will admit you once a day and will be punched. Let me repeat. They are not transferable. All parties who can conveniently make their entries on Saturday, are requested to do so and avoid the rush on Monday. S.J. Vining, Sec’y. (Daily Standard; August 11, 1912) In 2002, the citizens in their nineties recall the very early airplanes, and the excitement this new invention generated.

Celina’s first concrete highway was built in 1912—State Road 566, which became West Bank Road.

POST CARD: PLANE AT FAIR



*Meet your friends and see the Aeroplane
At the Banner Fair, Celina, Ohio.
August 20-21-22-23, 1912. (Post Card)*
[Note that the photographer superimposed
a photograph of the plane, on a photograph
of a fair - not the Banner Fair at Celina.
He then printed the words to meet at
the Banner Fair at Celina!]
Mechanics, mathematicians, and inventors
were the ones who contributed to progress
in machines, before and after the Wright
Brothers at Dayton, Ohio.

1913

"The Banner Fair." The great Banner Fair will open to the public August 18, with the best exhibits ever on any county fair grounds. Tuesday: the Boys Road Race and a free for all pace will be the event of special interest; a mile motorcycle race will be held. Wednesday: a Splendid race program; a 15 mile motorcycle race, and The Stock Parade. Thursday: 2:12 pace; 2:20 trot; 2:21 pace, and a 25 mile motorcycle race. Friday: First class races and 10 mile motorcycle races. The best shows are secured: Hill's Wild West with 40 people and 36 trained animals; Fred Klass' seven shows in one; The Dobson Motordrome, the most daring act ever seen on any fairgrounds. Daily free attractions—Kirk's Vocal Orchestra. Everyone will be here to see the events, S.S. Vining, Sec'y. (Mercer County Standard; July 13, 1913)

1914

"Banner Fair – Most Successful Ever Held in This , Van Wert, and all surrounding counties joined the Mercer County Crowd." Increased gate and grand stand receipts attest to the big crowd in attendance. One of the most exciting performances was the Boys Road Race. All roads lead to Celina Thursday morning. D.C. Kinder, Rockford, reported 8 coach loads from that area. G.C. Riddner, Cincinnati, driving a car which Barney Oldfield formerly broke the tract record, which ran against time and broke the Celina track record of 1:19 making the mile in 1:15. The boys have grown potatoes and the girls have baked and sewed. God bless our boys and girls. (Mercer County Standard; August 21, 1914)

1915

"Banner Fair Comes to Successful Close." The Banner Fair came to its grand finale with a record breaking attendance making it one of the best and biggest fairs ever held in the county. Thursday was a superb day with the people coming by the hundreds from all towns. It will not be equaled or rivaled by another fair in Ohio. The races were again one of the big events of Thursday. Fair Board officials and workers feel well satisfied with the 1915 results. It was an ideal week. The weather was cool and there was no dust. (Mercer County Standard; August 24, 1915)

Pax Machine Works, Inc. Sponsor

1916

"Banner Fair." Change is the order of the day. Old institutions are ruthlessly swept away in order to make room for new conditions. But the County Fair is a factor in our community life that ruthlessly defies the tooth of time and all encroaching change. Mercer County points with pride to the fact that year after year it holds one of the best fairs in Ohio. (Mercer County Standard; August 11, 1916)

1917

"Thursday the Big Day was No Exception." Thursday, always the big day, saw the usual crowd filling the grounds an the Grand Stand and everyone present to enjoy the fair to the fullest extent. The grounds and the grandstands were packed and jammed and the crush of automobiles made it most evident that the Banner Fair Board had acted wisely when it purchased the additional twelve acres of land for parking purposes. The weather was warm and threatened rain which came with a downpour. People got wet but they had enjoyed such a delightful day and the rain was so welcome they took the wetting of white shoes and dresses and Palm Beach suits as a part of the day's program and came away insisting that it was worth your life to be a Banner Fair visitant. (Mercer County Standard; August 24, 1917)

The Agricultural Society purchased twelve acres from Riley, August 24, 1917, to provide additional space for parking.



"We expect to see you August 20th to 24th, 1917, at the Banner Fair, Celina, Ohio"

Note the wooden Grand Stand, the dirt track, the racers, and the announcers' stand.

One man is wearing a straw hat. Everyone is wearing long sleeves as protection from the sun.

1918

"Unusual Attractions Will Greet Banner Fair Visitors." The management is now busy every day preparing for the big county event. Many and intensely interesting new features resulting from war conditions will be introduced. There is a Patriotic Day, Wednesday, when Frank B. Willis and A. P. Sandles will deliver addresses in the forenoon program. As far as the popular race program is concerned, the prospects were never better. Special efforts should be made to make Patriotic Day a big event. (Mercer County Observer; August 9, 1918).

World War I was being fought, resulting in a lot of emphasis on patriotism at local events. Over the years, Veterans have been recognized at the Mercer County Fair.

Celina VFW Post # 5713 Sponsor

1919

"Banner Fair." The next big event in Mercer County is that stand-by attraction, the Banner Fair. The prospect for the fair is not auspicious. Secretary Wm. Wiley reports an unprecedented demand for exhibition space and concessions. Good horse racing is an assured feature at the Banner Fair. Much interest is manifest in the Draft Futurity Show. The boys and girls are taking a hearty interest in the Fair, and there are many entries in the Homemaking, Industrials Arts, Poultry, Pumpkins, and Pig Growing Contest. It is the sum total of these little exhibits that fills up all the space in the Art and Agricultural Halls. (Coldwater Chronicle; Coldwater, Ohio, July 25, 1919)

The Coldwater Chronicle was a weekly newspaper at Coldwater, Ohio. It became the Mercer County Chronicle, and still serves Mercer County in 2002. The weekly paper gave annual articles about the Fair.

1920

*"Banner Fair." "Humming" is about the only word that will describe conditions at the Banner Fair grounds in Celina. Some scene of industry is presented there, for a whole army of folks are getting ready for the big Fair, day and night, next week. The race track is in excellent condition and many lively steppers have arrived and more will come in over Sunday. The \$1200 bonus offered by the Southwestern Ohio Circuit will make the racing more speedy. Newberry's Exposition band will furnish music and the Thearle-Duffield fireworks will be displayed in the center field. Family tickets are \$1.50 and single admission tickets are 50 cents. **The Fair Grounds have been illuminated with twenty big spot lights.** (Coldwater Chronicle; August 13, 1920) Electricity has played a major role in the implementation of events at the Grandstand and on the Grounds, as well as providing power for all of the equipment at the Mercer County Fair, in the Twentieth Century.*

1921

"Fireworks a Headliner." A series of mammoth fireworks display will be one of the headline attractions of the Banner Fair this year. This will be the biggest fireworks ever produced in the State. Each display will comprise an evening show in itself, in addition to the regular attractions and features of the Fair. This display is spectacular in the extreme and each evening will provide two hours of countless thrills. (Coldwater Chronicle; July 22, 1921)

"Banner Fair." Another year has rolled around, and the time is nearly here for the old stand-by attraction, The Banner Fair. The Banner Fair is noted for its horse races and this year will again sustain its reputation. The Banner Fair is a Mercer County Institution and should have the support and encouragement of everyone in the county. (Coldwater Chronicle; July 29, 1921)

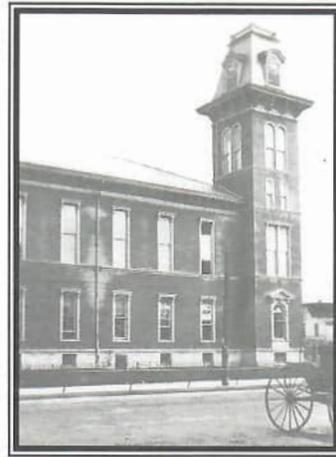
1922

*"Some Big Fair." All is set for the largest and greatest Banner Fair ever held in Mercer County. Final and finishing touches are being put on all the numerous arrangements and preparations for this "great" Mercer County Agricultural Exhibition. From now on there will be a steady stream to the Fair Ground and by Sunday, the population of the grounds will number several thousand. The Banner Fair is widely advertised. Folks know about it and come from long distances to attend. Favorable weather has always marked the Banner Fair. However, the Fair Board came to the conclusion that the charm might be broken and this year for protection took out **rain insurance**. The price of admission is \$2.00 for a family ticket and 50 cents for a single admission. (Coldwater Chronicle; August 11, 1922)*

Mercer County Electric, Inc. Sponsor



Mercer County's new Court House, Main Street, Celina, Ohio, was dedicated September 3, 1923.



Mercer County Court House, 1868-1923. (Stood in front of 1923 Court House site.)

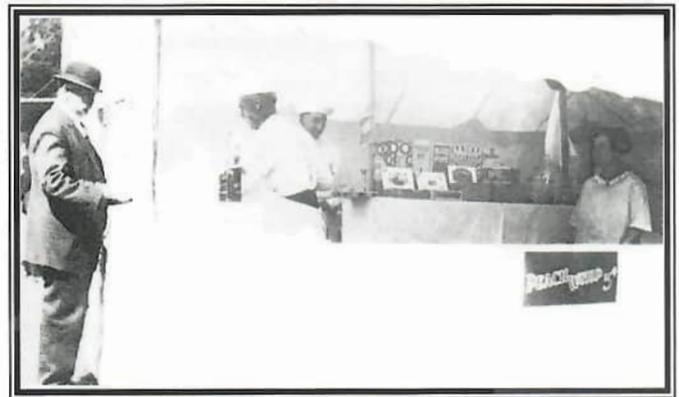
1923

"One More Week." The Big Banner Fair will be the Mecca for everyone. Secretary C.H. Disher reports an unprecedented demand for space at the grounds. Some good horse races will be seen at the fair this year. Horsemen are coming with their best steppers. (Coldwater Chronicle; August 3, 1923)

Most of the early fairs were only four days long. The 1923 Fair was advertised as August 14-17, both August 15 and 16 had activities in the evening only. This Fair advertised the "Kikutas Japanese Troupe," a gorgeous oriental splendor. They were billed along with the "Upton-Whiteside Troupe."

1924

*"Banner Fair will Be Next." From all indications it will be a record breaker, ahead of any fair for the past several years. Secretary Schindler and his able assistants and officers are bending every effort to make the August Fair one that will long linger in the minds of the thousands of people. The free attractions include a **balloon ascension and parachute drop each day by one of the most skilled artists in the line.** The McDonald Trio, two beautiful maidens and one otherwise, will put in the best stunts of bicycle riding you ever saw. The American Legion Band of Greenville will furnish the music on Wednesday and the Sidney Band of 40 pieces and three vocalists will be there Thursday. The midway will be more attractive than ever. If you stay at home, you will be mighty lonesome, for everyone else is going. (Coldwater Chronicle; July 25, 1924)*



THE BUCKEYE BOYS. Alice and Jim Jeffries and Bill Denney from Macedon, working at the lunch stand at the Fair during the 1920's. Jim Jeffries was one of the old barn builders.

Messenger Press Sponsor

1925

*“Banner Fair Board Met.” The director and officers of the Mercer County Agricultural Society held an all day meeting at the Fair Grounds Wednesday. Insurance and others matters of protection were taken care of, and tents were contracted for the use of the boys and girls’ exhibits. County Agent Banks Collings and Secretary H.W. Schindler will hold a meeting in every township in the near future and explain in detail the program that is being outlined for the coming fair. A **parade by the boys and girls from the various townships will be an added feature**, and prizes will be awarded to the cleverest dressed club and also the largest club. Wednesday will be a free day for children, and all school children, regardless of their ages will be admitted free. Everything is being done by the fair management to make the August fair a record breaker.*

1926

“The Mercer County Fair.” Fair attracts large crowds with popular exhibitions. The first fair was held back in 1868, says the Dayton Daily News. Any citizen of Mercer County would scout the idea that county fairs are decadent. So would any visitor to the fair any day of the past week. The attendance surpassed all previous records. The first Mercer County Fair was held in 1868, and from that early date to the present, there has never been a lapse nor failure to hold a successful exposition for 58 straight years. And the exhibits were worth while. The number and variety of displays made by the residents of the county was amazing. The fair gives evidence that the purpose of the managers has been realized, which is to encourage the people of the county to make their own fair. (Coldwater Chronicle; August 27, 1926)

[Note: This article referred to the revival of the county fair in 1868. That fair was referred to as the First Annual Mercer County Fair. However, there were one day fairs held in 1852, 1853, 1854, and 1855.]

The term “Roaring Twenties,” suggested good economic times and an enjoyment of life. The 1927 Mercer County Banner Fair Book entries will provide insight into the large number of exhibits, with premiums, at the Banner Fair. The Post Card with the Banner Fair Dirigible suggests an exciting time.

1927

*“Everything Set.” Everything is set for the fast approaching Banner Fair August 16-19. **The buildings have been painted, repaired and put in excellent shape, the trees trimmed, the Grand Stand Renovated, and the half mile track put in the best possible condition for races.** The stake races are closed with 107 entries and the biggest array of fast steppers ever seen at the fair is an assured fact. The free acts, both forenoon and afternoon, will be the best ever witnessed. The boys and girls will excel themselves in their work this year. Music will be furnished by four bands and other features on the grounds will keep the big attendance in a happy mood every minute they spend at the fair. The officers and directors are doing their part, working overtime to provide for your pleasure and instructions. (Coldwater Chronicle; August 5, 1927)*

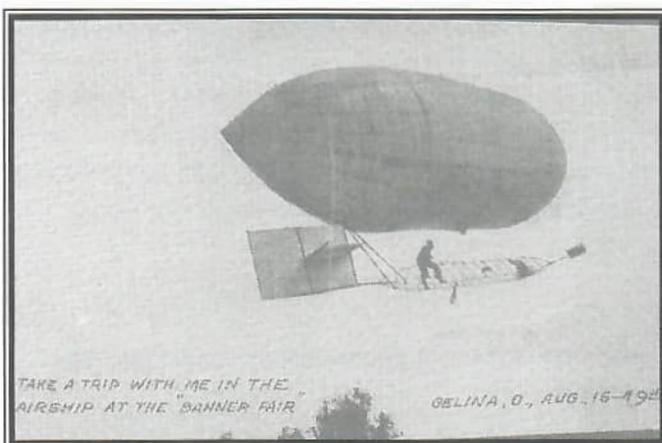
The local businesses helped in providing supplies and equipment for maintenance of the Fair Grounds, just as they had done in the past, and have done since that time.

Wal-Mart Sponsor

The 1927 Fair included a Horseshoe Pitching Contest. A List of Premiums included Live Stock.

Horses: Percheron, British Draft Breeds, English Shire, Clydesdale, Suffolk Stallions, Belgians, Ponies and Mules. **Cattle:** Polled and Shorthorn, Holsteins, Herefords, Aberdeen Angus, Galloways, Jerseys and Alderneys, Red Polled, Guernsey, Brown Swiss, with Beef Breed and Dairy Breed. **Sheep:** A. Merino, C. Merino, Rambouillet, Dorsets, Long Wool—Lincoln, Southdowns, Long Wool—Cotswold, Long Wool—Leicesters, Cheviot, Shropshire, Oxford, Hampshire, and Angora Goats. **Hogs:** Poland China, Duroc Jersey, Chester Whites, Berkshires, Hampshire, and Spotted Poland China. **Poultry:** American (20 divisions), Asiatic (8 divisions), Mediterranean (17 divisions), English (7 divisions), Polist, (8 divisions), Hamburg (6 divisions), Ornamental Bantams (16 divisions), Breeding Pens (57 divisions), Turkeys, (9 divisions), Ducks (11 divisions), Geese (5 divisions), Pigeons (confined to county), High Class (4 divisions), High Class Toys (12 divisions). **Rabbits:** English Hares, Belgian Hares, German Hares, White Hares, Common Rabbits, Pet Stock. They also had a display of Machinery and Automobiles. Products of the **Field and Garden** included Wheat, Oats, Rye, Barley, Buckwheat, Seeds, Grain on Stalk, Corn (new and old exhibits), Sweet Corn, Pop Corn, Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes, Mangel Wurzel, Turnips, Parsnips, Carrots, Onions, Tomatoes, Pickles, Peppers, Celery, Cabbage, Beets, Beans, Watermelons, Muskmelon, Pumpkins, Squashes, and Miscellaneous. **Fruit** included Summer and Fall Apples, Winter Apples, Crab Apples, Plums, Pears, Peaches, Quinces, Grapes, Bees and Honey. **Household Products** included Butter, Lard, Home Made Cheese, White Eggs, Brown Eggs, Maple Syrup, Sorghum, Vinegar, Home Made Candies, Hard Soap, Soft Soap, Pastry (33 varieties of breads, cakes, cookies, crulls, cream puffs and pies), Jellies, Jams and Preserves (35 varieties), Canned Vegetables and Fruits, Canned pickles, and Flowers(41 varieties). The **Art Hall** included premiums for paintings, drawings for oil, water colors, charcoal, crayon, pastel, sepia, ink and pencil, children's work, china and Porcelain Paintings, and Decorative Works of Art. The Art Hall also included household fabrics of carpets and rugs, comforts, quilts, bed spreads, sheets and pillow cases, table linens, tray cloths, centerpieces, doilies, curtains, towels, dresser or buffet sets, piano scarfs, library table scarfs, pillows, negligee and lingerie, embroidery, aprons, bags, handkerchiefs, doll dresses, and knit sweaters.

There were **Four Stake Races** for the 1927 Banner Fair; horses races were held each night. The **Boys' and Girls' 4-H Clubs** had judging in Dairy Clubs, Pig Clubs, Market, Breeding, Production and Marketing, Lamb Clubs, Poultry Clubs, Chicken Rearing, Food Clubs, Clothing Clubs, Live Stock Judging Contest. **The Grange Displays** offered four premiums, with a total of \$300 in prizes. The **Juvenile Grange** offered two premiums, \$10 & \$15.



"Take a Trip with Me in the Airship at the Banner Fair, Celina, Ohio, August 16-19th, 1927."



This wonderful old photograph of the Fair and trucks was not identified. Are the trucks dated to the 1920's?

Schroyer, Inc. Sponsor

In the "Big Banner Fair," booklet of 1927, the Upton-Whiteside Troupe advertised 3 Acts: "Dancing, sliding, jumping, walking up an unsupported ladder and hurtling over obstacles are all included in the route of astonishing feats on the slender stand of steel. Dainty little Miss LaMarr adds to the thrills with a startling exhibition of upside down swinging on a perilously high apparatus. The men in the act supply plenty of comedy with their clowning pranks, eccentric falls and slap-stick stunts." The Kikutas Japanese Troupe, "furnish the ultimate in thrills and to display in lavish profusion the handiwork of Japan's most select costumers. The Far East's jugglers, magicians and equalibrists are famed for their masterful exhibitions." They told of their hit at the "world's biggest theatre," the New York Hippodrome.

1928

"The Banner Fair." The fair came to a close on Friday—attendance not up to standard. After four days of favorable weather for the fair goes the fair came to a close. The fair was a success in most every way except in attendance, and this was largely due to the farmers being busy threshing and attending to other duties on the farm. Shows were scarce but the free attractions, races and other features more than made up for the loss. It was no fault of the officers and directors that patronage was not what it should have been. (Coldwater Chronicle; August 24, 1928)

The citizens of Mercer County are the ones who plan and implement the Mercer County Fair, year after year. The Mercer County Fair Board Secretary works throughout the year in helping with this Fair.



1929 Mercer County Banner Fair Officers and Board of Directors

First Row: A.A. Weigel, E.M. Dull, J. P. Wright, C.D. Wiest, H.W. Schindler, C. C. Ricketts, D.W. Miesse, Henry Beuchner. Second Row: E.G. Barker, H.F. Benner, A. A. Meiring, J. H. Gels, George Hill, John Lincoln, Irvin Hole, Wm. Heckman. February 14, 1929.

1929

"It's All Over - Banner Fair." The Fair 1929 passes into history as a very successful one. Running a fair is similar to running the Chronicle. To try to please everyone is a task that no one can perform. A State Inspector who visited the Banner Fair stated it was one of the cleanest and best he had visited in his rounds, and that is something that every Mercer County citizen should be proud. (Coldwater Chronicle; September 6, 1929) The fact that the State Inspector commented on the Fair being so clean, is representative of Mercer County's culture, that the entire county is clean and neat. This Fair preceded the Stock Market Crash of October 29, 1929.

Wabash Garage Sponsor

1930

"All Set For the Banner Fair August 25 to 29." The seventy-ninth annual fair of Mercer County will open August 25, 1930. This fair was first organized in March 1952. With the opening of the fair this year, will be found the largest exhibit of live stock that has ever been seen on the grounds. The horse pulling contest is gaining in momentum and in one township, we have five competing in this contest.

1931

"The Banner Fair." The attendance at the Banner Fair last week was far below average, due in large measure no doubt to the long continued depression and the rains on Wednesday and Thursday. The races were fair but the entries were shy, and this was due to the State Fair falling on the same dates. (Coldwater Chronicle; September 11, 1931)

1932

No fair was held. For the first time in 64 years, there was no Banner Fair. Because of the Great Depression, interest had greatly declined. Then, to make matters worse, the bad weather in 1931 resulted in the Fair Board losing a great deal of money. It was then decided to suspend operation of the fair in Mercer County.

The Mercer County Agricultural Society held its bank book at The Commercial Bank Company in Celina. (The Commercial Bank became a part of Citizens Commercial Bank, then Community First Bank & Trust.) A bank book from the 1930's is in the Archival Collections of the Mercer County Agricultural Society. The balance as of March 2, 1931, was reported as \$712.08, by Treasurer C.C. Ricketts. By the end of May, they had a balance of \$250.97. The balance on August 25, 1931 was \$5386.69, but as of October 2, 1931, their balance had been reduced to \$528.04. As of January 5, 1932, they had a balance of \$63.34. By June 14, 1932, they had a balance of just \$161.54. They also rented the Fair Grounds for family reunions. In 1932, the following family reunions were held there: Fast, Redman, Fisher, Kester, Keller, Purdy, Deitsch, Kittle, Slagle, Hone, Sealschott, Grant, Amspaugh, Lehman, Howell, McAfee, Pumphrey, Herring, Bauchar, Kuhn, Drury, Studebaker, Burriss, and Marbaugh. By January 4, 1933, the balance of the bank book read \$214.86. The Board rented barn space and pasture land. They held Rodeos on September 18 and 19, 1933, taking in \$225.00 and \$78.40.

1933

*"The Legion Post in Celina Plan to Give County Fair." Celina Post 210 of the American Legion making plans for an old-fashioned County Fair at the Fairgrounds on September 2, 3, and 4. There will be stock exhibits, horses races, plenty of concessions, rides, shows, etc. There will be no gate charge, but 25 cents will be charged for automobiles. Twenty-five cents will be the highest price for a seat in the Grand Stand. Three good races and a county race will be held each afternoon. **The Mercer County Fair as it will be known will be run entirely by the American Legion.** A. R. Hartzell has been elected president of the Fair Board; C. W. Vale, Secretary, and Fred Fisher, Treasurer. (Coldwater Chronicle; July 28, 1933.*

1934

No real fair was held, but the Celina American Legion continued to have three days of horse races, a harness meet, and other events.

Community First Bank & Trust Sponsor

1935

*"County Fair Revival Is Welcomed; 1935 Modernized Version." Remember when the **Old Banner Fair** was going strong and all of Mercer County, young and old, looked forward to that one week of fun and frolic. We've all missed it, for it was a grand time. But now we don't have to sit back and think of it, for its really here again, but so much bigger, so much better with new buildings, new Grand Stand, and better track, bigger and better concessions and shows, finer exhibits, more race entries, better stock exhibits, and so on, through all of the departments. The date of the Mercer County Fair is set for August 11-16. Sunday, the fair opens with B. Ward Beam's International Congress of Dare-Devils. (Coldwater Chronicle; August 2, 1935)*

The present Grand Stand was built in 1935, under the guidelines of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration.

"Huge Crowds in Attendance at County Fair." The fair was again run by the American Legion. There was over 1400 in attendance the first day. Profits were up and were to be used to pay off the old fair debt. Governor Martin L. L. Davey was present, the first Ohio Governor in thirty years to visit the Mercer County Fair. (Coldwater Chronicle; August 16, 1935)

*"Martin L. Davey to speak at Fair, August 18." Governor Martin L. Davey will attend the Mercer County Fair Tuesday, August 18th. He is scheduled to speak on "State Government." This is the first time in many years that a governor has attended the County Fair. **About thirty years ago, Ohio Governor Harmon visited the Fair.** No state head has been here during fair week since then, it is believed. (Daily Standard, August 17, 1935) [Judson Harmon was Governor of Ohio, 1909-1913.] That Tuesday evening, Governor Davey was hosted for a Chicken Dinner at Mercelina Hotel by Attorney B.A. Myers, Dr. Frank E. Ayers, and Mr. Dillon Smalley, and about 50 Democrats. In his speech, the Governor said that the winter of 1933, was "the darkest night in the history of the republic." The Governor praises the New Deal.*

State Representatives have always supported the Mercer County Fair's activities.

At the 1935 Fair, they revived a previous attraction, known as the "**Hobo Race**," whereby old autos "wheezed and steamed around the track to the delight of the spectators." On "**Thrill Day**," Sunday, August 16, another Ashcan Derby was held whereby no car valued at over \$50 could enter. They held three days of racing at the 1935 Fair, whereby entries were accepted from such formidable racing stables from Elyria, Urbana, Ada, Greenville and Kenton, Ohio. Mercer County horses in the races were owned by S.A. Bowlby, Celina; Leon Severns, Mendon; S.A. Adams, Coldwater, and Merle Yocum, Mendon.

1936

"Establishments Ready for Fair." With the Court House, Post Office, Banks, State Liquor Store, and practically every business house and shop in Celina closed, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons of Fair Week, we'd say, "Celina's ready for the Fair." This is the cooperative effort by the American Legion, who are sponsoring and promoting the Mercer County Fair. (Daily Standard; August 12, 1936) [Note: This was the second straight six day fair running from August 16-21, 1936. The biggest entertainment ever was "Listening In," a musical extravaganza direct from Broadway.]

State Representative Keith Faber Sponsor

A program from the 1936 Mercer County Fair, was entitled, The Third Mercer County Fair, Inc., Sponsored by Post 210, American Legion, Celina, Ohio.

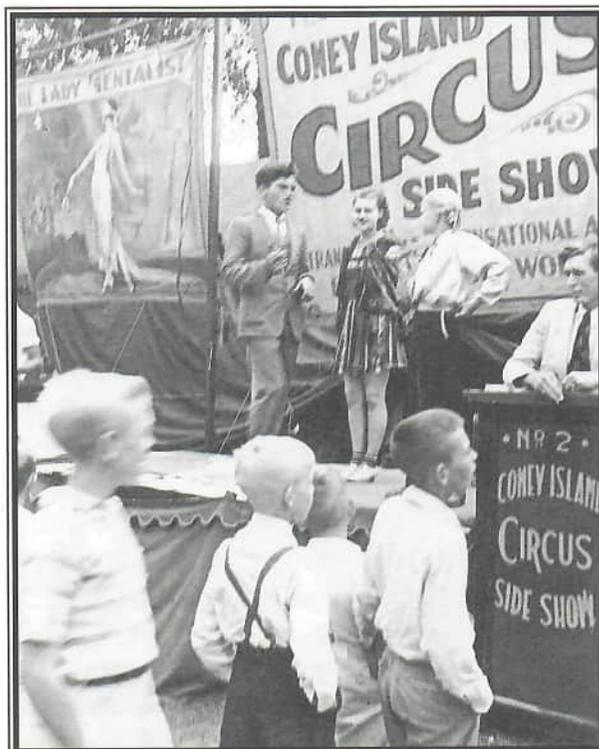
1937

"12,000 attend Fair Opening." Displays at the Mercer County Fair this year are bigger than ever before. Midway concessions extend farther east than other years. There are all kinds of rides and shows. On Sunday, B. Ward Beam presented Miss Mary Wiggins and her Hollywood Daredevils in a matinee; 2500 people watched the show. Pickpockets were working on the grounds yesterday, it was reported to officers. A slot machine concession which was operating on the grounds Saturday night was ordered out Sunday by the Sheriff's Department. (Daily Standard; August 16, 1937)

The 1937 Fair featured the world's most stubborn mule from Raum's Circus. A program from the 1937 Mercer County Fair, was entitled, The Fourth Mercer County Fair, Inc., Sponsored by Post 210, American Legion, Celina, Ohio.



Red Finke, Art Zint, Kermit Zint,
Setting up Food Stand at the Fair
Saturday, August 21, 1937
Mercer County Fair Grounds



Luke Spieler and friends at the Mercer County
Fair August 1938



Kermit Zint, Wapakoneta,
by the new 1935 Grandstand.
Saturday, August 21, 1937
Mercer County Fair Grounds

Celina American Legion Post 210 Sponsor

1938

"Part of Fair to be Radioed." The Dayton Daily News Radio Station WHIO will broadcast parts of the Mercer County Fair, Albert C. Stein announced this morning. One half hour each day will be broadcast. Presidents of civic organizations will be introduced. Fair goers will be interviewed and parts of the fair will be put on the air. C. W. Vale urged farmers to get their horses ready for the farmers' race that will be held on Wednesday and Friday. (Daily Standard; August 8, 1938)

1939

"Future Farmers Will Display Produce at Fair." The Mercer County Fair is adding a new department to the premium list this year, to give a chance for the boys enrolled in Vocational Agriculture in the various schools in the county to exhibit projects. There were four departments in the county last year, namely, Rockford, Mendon, Celina, and Fort Recovery, with a total enrollment of 150 boys. Next year Coldwater and St. Henry will have departments with 200 boys. (Daily Standard; August 11, 1939)

1940

"Amateur Night at Fair Draws Crowd." A large crowd of Fair goers attended the Amateur program last evening at the Mercer County Fair Grounds. There were 28 acts presented by talented groups from various parts of the county. Judges were Harold Leslie of Convoy; Fred Wolenbaugh, Van Wert; and Hugh Downs of Lima. Mr. Downs of WLOK also acted as Master of Ceremonies. The four prize winners were as follows: Fiely Trio, first, \$25.00; Patsy Ruth Selvidge second, \$15.00; Ray Sisters, third, \$10.00; Gerald Cencebaugh, fourth, \$5.00. Each of the other 24 acts received \$2.00. (Daily Standard; August 12, 1940) In 1940 the Agricultural Society was reorganized again with Henry Miller being elected President and W.F. Archer elected as Secretary. Both held these positions until the 1960's. [Note: The Fair was again taken over by the Mercer County Agricultural Society. Thanks to the American Legion, it survived and was out of debt. The Hugh Downs referred to above, later on gained national fame on television.] At a special ceremony at the 1976 Mercer County Fair, the people who reorganized the Mercer County Fair in 1940 were honored: C. F. Kuhn, Carl Hawk, Emil Goettemoeller, Albert Hassan, Henry Miller, Fred Miller, and Walter Pierstorff. In 1940, Austin Cox began his Root Beer concession with the original Root Beer Barrel, at the Fair. (Mr. and Mrs. Cox still host this stand in 2002.) 1940 was also the first year at the Fair for the Mowery Root Beer Stand, which stayed in the family when stand went to the Germanns in 1998.

1941

"Mercer County Fair Opens Sunday." Sunday marks the opening of the annual Mercer County Fair and reports of the board members of the fair promises to be the largest ever held here. The livestock entries are such that the largest amount of space ever devoted toward this branch of the fair has been ordered. Sunday's program includes the Youth conference under the direction of the Mercer County Christian Youth Association. Monday is designed as entry day and all material must be entered by that time. Tuesday has been set aside as children's day and all rides will be half-priced for the youngsters. The Celina stores and banks will closed on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons. On these three days will be the horse racing in the afternoons. **Friday night the WLW Barn Dance Radio stars will entertain the Fair goers.** (Mercer County Chronicle, Coldwater, Ohio; August 8, 1941)
Radio became another favorite method of communication at this time in history.

On December 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii to draw the United States into a war against Japan, Germany, and Italy of World War II. Tires were hard to get for the automobiles because the raw materials were used in the War effort.

1942

"County Fair to feature Many Well Known Radio Acts." White Ford and his famous character, "The Duke of Paducah" who is heard every evening over the NBC network, on "Plantation Party program" will be at the Mercer County Fair, August 16 - 21. The racing program each day is bringing to Celina some of the finest horses on dirt track today. W.F. Archer, Fair Secretary, says that many persons are planning to make this week their vacation week, and to spent it visiting the Fair, rather than trying to take a trip in the car, with the tires so hard to get. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 7, 1942)

1943

*"Mercer County Fair set for August 15-20." At a meeting of the Fair Board, it was decided unanimously to have the fair operation on **Central War Time**. At present, the majority of the towns in the county are using Central War Time. Since we are in war, many changes have been made necessary in regard to the Fair, but everything possible has been done to make this county fair a success even though some things are out of the question at this time. (Mercer County Chronicle; July 9, 1943)*

1944

"Fair Closes Tonight." Henry Miller, President of the Mercer County Fair Board stated that attendance at the livestock exhibits and the fair as a whole were bigger this year. Alvin J. Dicke, superintendent of cattle, stated, "It is my sincere belief that the show this year excels that of all past years." The hog and sheep classes had an exceptionally large number of entries. There was much enthusiasm in horse racing shows by the fans. The final big attraction will be the Sun Bros. Circus on Friday night. Also included in Friday night's show will be the Lange Troupe, often billed as the world's best tumblers. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 18, 1944) The Mercer County Highway Department helped with the Fair and were photographed at the Grandstand on June 14th, 1944. (See page 40, for 1944 photograph of the Mercer County Highway Department.)

During World War II, a Prisoner of War Camp was maintained at the present site of the 4-H Camp, at Harbor Point by Grand Lake. In 1944, some 300 German War Prisoners were brought to Mercer County to pick tomatoes for local canneries in Rockford, Celina & St. Henry; the Prisoners were housed at the 4-H camp.

The land originally belonged to Dr. and Mrs. Robert Riley who donated the land to the Mercer County Commissioners, for the 4-H Camp in 1936. After World War II, the Camp has since been used as the 4-H Camp.



The Beckman & Gast Company, Inc. Sponsor

STALL RENT. In the Archival Collections of the Mercer County Agricultural Society is a **Financial Ledger, 1944 - 1956**. For an example of income from Stall Rent during October 1944, the following bills were paid: G.S. Hill, \$5.00; Wm. M. Martz, \$1.50; Billy Goggen, \$4.00; Dale Now, \$1.00; Earl Miller, \$3.00; Geo. Ward, \$2.25; G.C. Brannon, \$1.25; Mr. Bowbly, \$1.00; Lee Dabbelt, \$10.00; Geo. Ward, \$1.50; Harold Bowbly, \$3.00; G.S. Hill, \$4.00 and M. M. Martz, \$3.00. Leo Dwyer paid \$1.50 for boat rent. W. H. Hecht paid \$1.00 for cow rent. For October expenses, the Society paid for bolts, lumber, safety hooks, sickles, hinges, and varnish.

1945

"6 Day Banner Fair Will Open on Sunday, August 21." Opening the Fair Sunday will be performances of the Boone County Jamboree, WLW radio show. The youngsters have a field day Monday, Junior fair day, with an afternoon recreational program of races. Horse racing will be a big attraction at the Fair; purses run to about \$8175. The Sun Bros. Circus is the feature of Wednesday and Thursday nights. The Hoosier Hop, WOWO Radio show, will close the fair with a night performance in front of the Grand Stand. Other attractions include livestock exhibits and judging, agricultural and art exhibits. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 10, 1945) [Note: This was the first time, the fair was referred to as the "Banner Fair," since 1931, as it then went out of existence for a few years.]

World War II ended during the 1945 Mercer County Fair. The long awaited announcement that the War was over was made during the horses races. Upon hearing the good news, so many people in the stands threw their ration tokens and food stamps into the air that it looked like flying confetti.

1946

"Banner Fair Breaking All Attendance Records." The fair has been blessed by fairly clear days and while the nights have been unseasonably cool, this has not deterred attendance. Thursday at 1:30 P.M. will be held the following harness races: 2:06 bar pace, \$500 purse; 2:06 bar trot, \$500; 2:11 bar trot, \$500. Other events for the closing days will include the following: Hoaglan's Hippedrome Circus, horseshoe pitching contest, livestock parade, horse pulling contests, and Friday, a giant display of fireworks after the races. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 16, 1946)

[Note: This was the first post-war fair. Based on the success of it, it was obvious that the people of Mercer County were returning to normal activities.]

1947

"Banner Fair Will Open Sunday; 6 Days, Nights." Featured on Sunday, the opening day, will be a rodeo in the afternoon given by the Fort Recovery Riding Club, and the WLW Midwestern Hayride in the evening. There is no general admission charge Sunday. Monday will be kids day with children of school age admitted free of charge. Tuesday will be Junior Fair Day. Purses for the horse racing events have increased by \$3500 for this year's fair, and running and harness racing combined will offer \$9975. A musical revue will be presented Wednesday and Thursday evenings, will be Klein's Rhythm Revue of 1947. Thursday is Veterans' Day; all veterans in uniform or with discharge papers will be admitted free. This is also called V-J Day and the Celina Legion Post will present a brief program in observance of the victory over Japan. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 8, 1947) In 1947, Darrell Helms, age 8, came to the Fair with his father James Helms, with the Cane Rack Game. Darrell's son joined this family business in the third generation, in 1996.

Local businesses helped with all the maintenance and construction jobs at the Mercer County Fair.

Moeller Door Sales Sponsor

1948

"Attendance at County Fair may Break Records." Gov. Thomas J. Herbert will be at the Fair Grounds Thursday afternoon to present a Governor's Award to the winner of a selected race in the harness racing program. Thursday will be Veterans' Day. The Thursday program will be featured by the Grand Livestock Parade at 10:30 A.M. There is a full program of horse racing on Friday, with purses totaling \$2800 in the afternoon and \$1075 in the evening under the lights. After the last Friday race a fireworks display featuring the "Fountain of Jewels" will bring the fair to a close. (Mercer County Chronicle, August 20, 1948)

OHIO GOVERNOR TO SPEAK AT MERCER COUNTY FAIR, LANDS AT WRONG AIRPORT?

A story tells about an Ohio Governor who flew to Mercer County to speak at the Mercer County Fair, and landed at the wrong airport. His plane landed at the old Airport on Burkettsville-St. Henry Road, when he was planning to land at the Lake Field Airport, near Celina. [The story did not identify the Governor, but Governor Herbert may have been the Ohio Governor named in this story.]

FEDERAL EMERGENCY AIRPORT. In 1939, the site on the west side of Burkettsville-St. Henry Road, north of Route 219, was chosen, as a federal emergency landing field, because it was half-way between Dayton and Fort Wayne, for pilots. On December 18, 1939 this site was officially opened. **Site Four Intermediate Landing Field, called the Coldwater Airport, was completed by January 1940, with Boundary Lights surrounding the field. The control building with the 50 foot revolving beacon, stood on the southeast corner of the field.** (This beacon stood until the 1950's.) The Coldwater Airport was an L shaped field of 102 acres, with the long leg running east and west, and the other north and south, with a high beacon set to the outside of the southwest corner. The east west runway was 3340 feet and the north south 3100 feet in length. This airport was only used a few years, during World War II.

[The **Lake Field Airport**, near Montezuma and Grand Lake, was begun in 1945, and continues in 2002.]

1949

"Annual Fair Will be Held as Planned." Three mild polio cases have been credited to Mercer County this year. Officials of the Mercer County Fair decided that the widely scattered polio cases in the county thus far have no indications of an epidemic. Unless conditions become worse the annual fair will be held as scheduled August 14-19. (Mercer County Chronicle; July 29, 1949)

"Lid Down on All Public Gatherings in Mercer County; Fair Canceled." All public gatherings in Mercer County were curtailed effective last Sunday by sudden action of the Mercer County Board of Health last Saturday night. In an effort to establish practices to prevent the spread of poliomyelitis, the Board of Health rules that all children under 18 years of age must not attend public gatherings." (Mercer County Chronicle; August 12, 1949)

The 1949 Fair was canceled because of the polio epidemic. The 4-H Fair was held later in the fall that year. In the Archival Collections of the Mercer County Agricultural Society is a copy of the book, entitled, The Banner Fair, Celina, Ohio, August 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 1949, OFFICIAL PREMIUM LIST. That Fair was not held.

Local businesses have always helped with the financial support of the Mercer County Fair. The year 1949 was no different, in that the Fair had major community and business support.

The Reynolds and Reynolds Co. Sponsor

However, many businesses advertised in that 1949 book, which would provide a profile of the businesses in the area in 1949: Adams General Store, American Gas Service Co., Amstutz Hatcheries and Amstutz Feed Co., Andrews Garage, Andrews Saw Mill, Anselman Jewelry Store, Jos. H. Backs, Bader Auto Parts, Baker Electric, Arlie Baucher, J. R. Baumgardner, Beech's Market, Beougher's Store, Berne Equity Exchange Co., Birt's Shell Service, Blue Star Grocery, Hardware and Garage, Bock Office Supplies, Borden's Ice Cream, Bowen-Eichar Tractor Sales, Bricker Farm Equipment Store, Bruns Department Store, Bruns Brothers Groceries, Bruns Bros. Insurance, Bucks Corner, Bud's Restaurant, C & B Café and Hotel, Canary Brothers, Celina Auto Company, Celina Body Shop, Celina Fruit Market, Celina Implement Co., Celina Lumber and Supply Co., Celina Motor Sales, Inc., Celina News Agency, Celina Steam Laundry and Dry Cleaners, Celina Welding and General Repair, Celina Winner Co., Central Garage, Central Ohio Breeding Ass'n., Charles Wortz Sohio Service, Veryl Cisco, City Service Gas Station, Coldwater Union Stock Yards, Coldwater Car and Home Supplies, Cunningham General Store, Custer and Dull Stock Yards, Dave's Market, Deardoff's Laundry, Desch's, E. E. Dibble and Sons, Dickman Coal Yard, Dick and Stallter, Don's and Dave's Service Station, Drake's Implement Store, Dues and Lefeld Implement Co., Durbin General Store, Easton Motor Sales, Eblen Ice Co., Eddie's Market, Edgewater Park, Ellis Insurance Service, Equity Dairies, Inc., Faller's Service Station, Farm Supply Co., Farm Bureau Insurance, Farmers Grain and Supply Co., Earl Fast, Fegley's Café, Fegley's Locker Service, Martin Feltz, Feltz Service Station, Fisher Hardware and Implement Co., Forste's Restaurant, Val Fortman Grocery, Fox Den, Howard Frahm, Fort Recovery Farm Equipment, Fort Recovery Lumber Co., Fullenkamp Dist. Co., Gagel Hardware Co., Leo H. Gast Shoe Store, Gilberg's, Goldsteins, Grand Lake Farms, Homer Green, Griggs Garage, L.J. Guggenbiller, Hale Real Estate and Insurance Agency, Vaughn Hall, Hamilton's Grocery, C.E. Hawk and Sons, Heckler Hardware Co., Heckler's Meat Market, Heffner Bros., Heffner's Cash Store, Hill's Dress Shop, Hull Brothers, Dallas Jenkins, Ivan J. Johnson Garage, Katherine's Beauty Shoppe, Kaye's Store, Kay's Dress Shoppe, Jack Kerns Chevrolet Co., Ketcham's, Kindell's Drug Store, Kings Korner, Kistler's Barber Shop, Kohn & Williams Dept. Store, Krogman's Garage, Laffin Refrigeration, Lake Field Airport, Lakeview Market, Land O'Dance, Lee Ott Tractor Sales, Lee-Wahl Farm, Leugers Insurance Agency, Dr. Geo. W. Lies, V.L. Linneman, L.C. 5 & 10c Store, Long's Department Store, Luttmmer Shoe Shop, Lutz Electric, Main Restaurant, Maria Stein Grain Co., Martz Cabinet Works, Mary's Beauty Salon, Maurer's Hatchery, Chas. McAfee, Meadow Gold Dairy Products, Mendon Livestock Exchange, Mendon Service Co., Meinerding's Nite Club, Mercelina Hotel, Mercer County Farm Bureau Co-Operative Assoc., Mercer Co. Seed Improvement Ass'n., Mercer Grain Co., Mersman and Brandon, Model Milling Company, Modern Appliance shop, Modern Beauty Shop, Chas (Hank) Myers, D.H. Myers & Son, Neals Sohio Service Station, New Idea Farm Machinery, Nickel Brothers, and Nuding Brothers.

Many businesses advertised in The Banner Fair, Celina, Ohio, August 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 1949, OFFICIAL PREMIUM LIST: Ohio State Fair, Osterholt Garage and Body Shop, Paysen's Electric Service, Pet Milk Co., Pifer's Seed Farm, Pontius Hardware, J. Dolan Purdy Insurance Agency, Pure Oil Service Station, Production Credit Ass'n., Pr-Ayr-ie Farm, R & S Electric Co., Reichert Tractor Sales, Rentzch's, Glenn Rice, Robbins and Robbins, Robbin's Leather Store, Rockford Hardware Co., Rockford Implement Store, Rockford Lumber Co., Rockford Stone Co., Roebuck's Elevator, Ben Romer's Meat Market, Harry A. Romer, Stanley A. Romer, Roses' High Quality Duroc Farm,

Ft. Recovery Lumber Company Sponsor

S & C Restaurant, Sauer's Drug Store, Schindler's Drug Store, Schenking's Store, Schlenker's Market, Schoen Garage, Schrage Service Station, Schroyer's, Schuerman Hardware, Schuncks Jewelers, Severt Kasco Feed Service, Shady Ayr Farm, Shadynook Farm Store, Shadynook Farms, Sharp Canning Co., Shridner's Sohio Service Center, Don Siebert, F.A. Sites, Dr. N. R. Slavik Veterinarian, D. R. Smalley Farms, Snack Shack, Snyder's Service Station, Sonderman and Co., Sowar's Department Store, Spoltman Hardware, Spriggs Furniture Co., Sprigg's Garage, State Line Tavern, St. Clair Mills, St. Henry Cement Products Co., St. Henry Furniture Co., St. Henry Hardware and Supply Co., St. Marys Fertilizer Co., Steinbrunner and Kolp Lumber Co., Otto Steinbrunner, Stob-Ayr Farm, Stokley Foods Inc., Superior Ice Cream Co., Temple and Temple, The Beckman and Gast Co., The Celina Equity Exchange Co., The Celina Flower Shop and Green House, The Celina Group, The Celina Manufacturing Co., The Celina Stearic Acid Co., The Chickasaw Milling Co., The Citizens' Banking Co., The Coffee Shop, The Commercial Bank Co., The Desch Builder's Supplies, and The Daily Standard.

Other 1949 advertisers were: The Dayton Power and Light Co., The First National Bank of Celina, The Fox and Hess Milling Co., The Fort Recovery Equity Exchange Co., The Fort Recovery Journal, The John W. Karch Stone Co., The Little Elevator, The Mercer Co. Ayrshire Assoc., The Mercer Co. Guernsey Breeders' Ass'n, The Mercer Co., Holstein Friesian Ass'n., The Mersman Bros. Corp., The Montezuma Grain Co., The Mutual Savings and Loan Assoc., The National Finance Co., The Paul Lefeld Implement Co., The People's Bank Co. Coldwater, The People's Bank Co. Fort Recovery, The Pogue Co., The Producers Creamery and Cold Storage Co., The Remaklus Co., The Rockford National Bank, The Rockford Press, The Schockman Lumber Co., The Saint Henry Bank, The Saint Henry Locker Co., The Style Shop, The White Front Lunch, Thomas Insurance Agency, Tony Doll Men's Shop, Tumbush Bros., Jos. Uhlenhake and Sons, United Grain and Milling Co., Vale's Funeral Home, Voegel's Jewelry Store, VonderHaar's Market, Wabash View Farm, Wangler's Hardware, Wayne Café, Drs. George and LeRoy Weber, Westgerdes Cabinet Shop, West Side Auto Parts, White Villa Grocery, Willett Motors, Willhoff's, Wilson & Bomholt, Inc., Mrs. LeRoy Wilson, Wisterman's, Wolfe & Whyman, Wolff's Service Station, Wyckoff & Ross, Zehringer Brothers Clover Farm Store, and Zimmerman Bros. Jewelers.

That 1949 extensive list of area businesses illustrates the importance of their annual financial contributions to the Mercer County Banner Fair. That has been true in the past, and continues to be true in the year 2002, 150th Anniversary of the Mercer County Banner Fair at Celina, Ohio.

1950

"Mercer County Banner Fair Opens Next Sunday." Mercer County's annual Banner Fair opens at Celina, Sunday afternoon, August 13, with its customary free gate and will continue through Friday evening, August 18. Sunday's Grand Stand attraction for both the afternoon and evening will be the WLW Midwestern Hayride and will include the Pleasant Valley Boys, Prairie Ramblers, Judy Perkins, and Neal Burris. Monday is Kid's day and will include competitive events for both boys and girls and five pony races. Tuesday evening, fair patrons will have an opportunity of seeing the first night harness racing in the history of the fair. Klein's Broadway Fantasies will be the Grand Stand attraction on both Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The fair will close on Friday evening with a seven event running race program. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 11, 1950)

Lehman Funeral Home, Inc. Sponsor

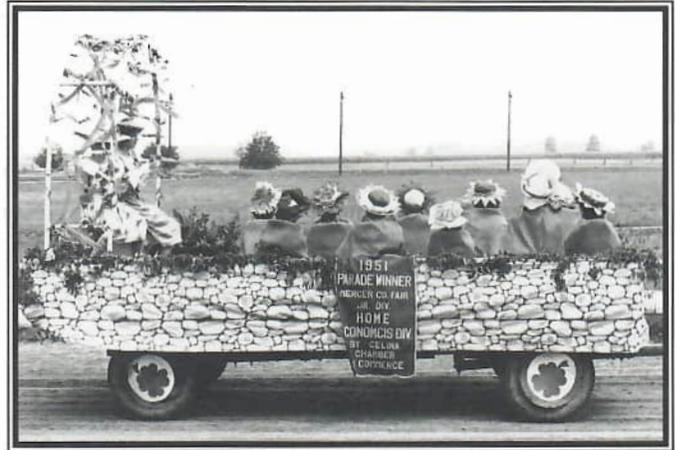
STALL RENT. In the Archival Collections of the Mercer County Agricultural Society is a **Financial Ledger, 1944 - 1956**. For an example of income from Stall Rent during December 1950, the following bills were paid: Mary Gibson, \$3.00; Link Garman, \$2.00; George Hill, \$3.00; Bill Martz, \$5.00; Had Forwerick, \$4.00; John Beams, (office & stall) \$4.00; Beam Brothers, \$6.00; Bill Goggin, \$3.00; Charlie Rowley, \$7.00; K. Shaw, \$4.00; Glenn Nolan, \$2.00; Al Lyons, \$2.00; Mary Gibson, \$3.00; George Hill, \$3.00; John Beams, \$4.00; Beam Brothers, \$3.00; Charlie Roley, \$5.00; Bill Goggin, \$4.00; Link Garman, \$2.00; Had Forwerick, \$2.00; Harold Bowlby, \$1.50; and Ray Reichart, \$12.00.

1951

*"Premium Lists Distributed for County Fair." More than 3000 premium lists for the Mercer County Banner Fair, which will be held August 12-17 were distributed this week by mail to prospective exhibitors in Mercer and adjoining counties. W.F. Archer stated that entries will be accepted on and after August 1 in the Agriculture Society office in the Mercer County Court House. A new feature of this year's fair will be a **Tractor Pulling Contest** which will be held Friday afternoon August 17. S. R. Adams, superintendent of the Tractor Pulling Contest stated that there will be three classifications of tractors, based entirely on weight. The speed committee has again planned night harness racing for Tuesday evening, August 14. Last year was the first time that harness racing was ever held as a part of the night Fair. (Mercer County Chronicle; July 27, 1951)*



8-14-1951 Race at Mercer County Fair Grounds



The 1951 Parade Float Winner, at the Mercer County Fair, Junior Division, Home Economics division, sponsored by the Celina Chamber of Commerce.



J. L. Schleuter, Custodian of Grounds for Mercer County Fair, 1940's- 1950's.

**Celina-Mercer County
Chamber of Commerce** Sponsor

1952

“Century of Progress, 1852-1952, at County Fair.” The new Mercer County Highway Garage had taken on a new look this week as carpenters started laying out the interior of the building for the big antique display and “Century of Progress” exposition which will be held as part of the **Centennial Fair**. Dr. John Gregory and Robert U. Ross are in charge of Antiques which will be centered around two rooms arranged to portray customs in 1852. Many local industries are planning to display early products in contrast to items on sale today. A 4-H booth will highlight the 50th anniversary of the founding of the 4-H movement by A.B. Graham of Springfield. The Fair opens August 10, with a free gate and with the WLW show as the Grand Stand attraction. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 1, 1952) [Note: This was the 100th Anniversary of the first Fair, held in 1852. It was not the 100th Fair.]

The Mercer County Highway Garage is located inside the South Gate of the Mercer County Fair Grounds. This building is all brick construction, 80 feet wide by 160 feet long. The building was designed by Ralph Fanning, Celina, and constructed by the H. U. Tuttle Company at a cost of \$126,914, and was occupied in 1951. **This Mercer County Highway Garage Building was used at the August 1952 Mercer County Fair, to house the display of “100 Years of Progress,” at the Mercer County Centennial Fair.** [During World War II, the Members of the Mercer County Highway Department, helped at the Mercer County Fair Grounds. Their photograph was taken June 14, 1944, next to the Grand Stand.] The Highway Department is under the direction of the Mercer County Engineer’s Office.



Mercer Co. Highway Garage, S. door, 1978



Mercer Co. Highway Garage, N. Door, 2002



Mercer County Highway Department helping at the Fair Grounds, June 14, 1944; World War II.

Mercer County Engineer Roy F. Thompson, P.E., P.S.
Assistant Engineer, James Wiechart, P.E., P.S. Sponsors

The Past Fifty Years: 1953-2002

1953

“Improvements Ready Fair Grounds for Mercer 101 Banner Fair.” On the Art Hall, a new roof is being completed and box seats in the Grandstand have been elevated. The newly acquired 12 acre addition on the west side of the Fair Grounds is being converted into a parking area. A new gate has been installed at the south entrance so that exhibitors, trucks and equipment can go directly to their locations without going through the midway. The Highway Garage will be used for Commercial Exhibits and for the Antique Show. The Fair opens on Sunday, August 16 with a free gate and the Fort Recovery Riding Club as the Grandstand attraction. Monday will be “Kid’s Day.” Tuesday is Junior Fair Day. Wednesday will be judging livestock. Thursday will be the Livestock Parade. Friday will be a 4-H and the F. F. A. Tractor rodeo. Race finals will be held Friday. (Mercer County Chronicle; July 31, 1953)

1954

*“Fair opens Saturday.” Wrestling Saturday night is a new attraction. The Fair opens August 14, and continues through August 19. Saturday afternoons running race programs will bring to Mercer County some of the best running horses in this section of the country. Saturday night’s Grandstand attraction will be **Bob Otto’s All Star Wrestling Show**, presenting such wrestlers as the Great Durango, Nick Roberts, June Byers, Dot Dotson, Barbara Baker, Penny Banner, Big Thrill Miller and Sonny Kwigis. A religious program, sponsored by the **Mercer County Ministerial Assn.**, will be presented in front of the Grandstand at 1:30 Sunday. A Band Contest will be the Grandstand attraction on Wednesday. The Fair will close Thursday with a six event running race program. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 13, 1954) [Note: This is the first Fair to be Saturday to Thursday, rather than Sunday through Thursday.]*

1955

A full page advertisement promoted the Fair in the *Chronicle*. It promoted a new event—**80 racing greyhound dogs**. Harness racing, trotting and pacing, with \$5,000 in purses were sponsored. The running races had \$2300 in purses. There were **motorcycle races** sponsored by the **Grand Lake Motorcycle Club**. Bob Otto returned with his All Star Wrestling with TV Stars; Carl Von Albers, Big Len Montana, Gardena Faieta, Joe Scarpella, Betty Hawkins, and Barbara Baker. The fair ran from Saturday, August 13 through Thursday August 16. Family tickets sold for \$3.00 and a single was 60 cents; and 25 cents to park a car. **Hopewell Grange, No. 2688, having been founded in 1874, held their first meeting in their new grand Hall** at the Mercer County Fair Ground August 8, 1955. (*Mercer County Chronicle*; August 12, 1955)

In the Archival Collections of the Mercer County Agricultural Society is a **Financial Ledger, 1944 until 1956**. For an example Stall Rent during March, 1955, was paid by Grover Brannon, Arthur Hecht, Dick Coty, Linda Bruns, Dave Smelzer, Mr. Hole, Sam Heppard, Fay Stiverson, Marion Becker, Wm. Martz, Dave Nedderman, Wm. Hecht, John Beams, Harold Bowlby, Lowell Kline, J.V. Phillips, Marion Becker, Harry Palen, Babe Beams, Dr. Parrish, F. Fountain, Charlie Post, Jack Gillum, and Urban Sample. An average of \$4.00 Stall rent and \$1.00 electricity fees were collected monthly.

Mercer Co. Soil and Water Conservation District Sponsor

1956

That Financial Ledger listed Reunions held at the Fair Grounds, in 1956, by the following families: Birt, Meyer, Florence, Mays, Amsbaugh, Schindollar, Steffan, Fast, Steinke, Bollenbacher, Pierstorff, Evans, Heymeier, Beckstedt, Stucky, Hainline, Borger, Eichenauer, Miller, Gephart, Deitsch, and Beams.

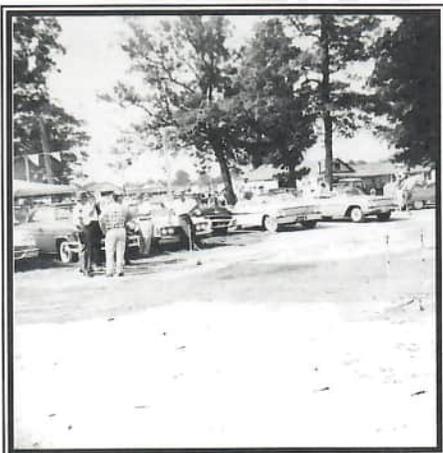
*"Four Nights of Racing Planned at the Banner Fair." Four nights of **Racing** will be the big feature at the 104th Banner Fair, August 11-17. The Fair will open Saturday with the **Junior Dairy Show** being the main attraction. On Sunday, the **WLW Midwestern Hay Ride** will be at the Grandstand. Judging of the livestock starts Monday. Tuesday has been set aside for "Children's Days." Tuesday will be an **Open Class Swine Show** and a **County Horseshoe pitching contest**. The **Peggy Jean Roan Recreation camp** will be at the Grandstand. Wednesday a **Band Contest** will be staged, and a **Horse Pulling Contest** will be held in front of the Grandstand, with Running Races under the lights. **The milk house and milking parlor at the Fair Grounds is a new addition.** (Mercer County Chronicle; August 3, 1956)*

1957

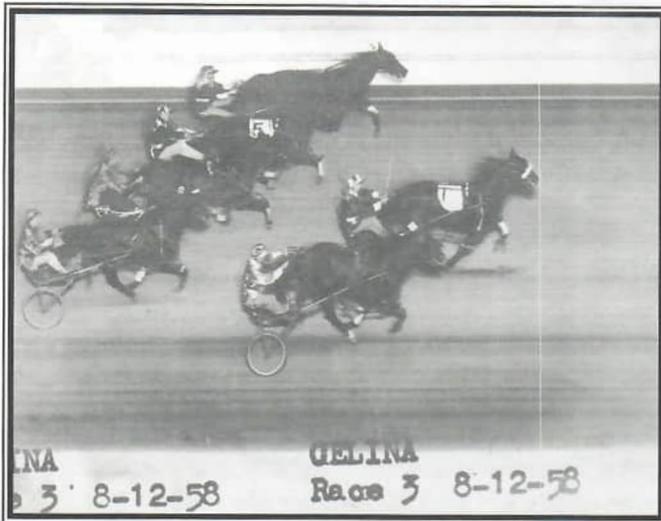
*"Banner Fair Premium books Mailed Out Tuesday July 16." Some 2000 Premium Books were mailed by the Fair Board, according to **Secretary Foster Archer**. **Mercer County Associate Agricultural Agent Adrian DeBrosse, Coldwater**, has announced that a building 16 x 30 has been completed at the Fair Grounds. This building is attached to the milk house and was built by the Mercer County Dairy Association with material donated by the Mercer County Dairy Breeders Association at a cost of \$300. DeBrosse stated that a tractor tipping demonstration will be held for the first time on Monday. **William Gill, Extension Agricultural Engineer at Ohio State** will be in charge of the event, assisted by **Bill Stuckey, farm safety specialist also at Ohio State.** (Mercer County Chronicle; July 18, 1957)*

1958

*"County Fair Swings Into Last Two Days Battered By Weather But Still a Success." Mercer County's 106th Banner Fair started Saturday and continued through Sunday with fine weather and record crowds, then Sunday night it rained. Monday it rained more and Tuesday held off the rain but gave out steam like the ground was being par-boiled. Load after load of gravel was hauled into the Fair Grounds to fill the mud holes, at least assuring a firm foundation for future fairs. The Thrill Show had to be canceled and the rain ruined the major part of the Children's Day events. Wednesday there is to be a continuance of the free show at the **Implement Dealer's Tent** in the morning. The Junior Livestock sale will be the top feature on the last day, Thursday. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 14, 1958)*



Sanning Service Station Sponsor



Race 3; 8-12-1958



Race 5; 8-15-1959

1959

*"Daily Show and Races to Open Mercer Co. Fair." Banner Fair to run for six days and six nights. The McKinley Rodeo is scheduled for Sunday afternoon and evening. On Monday morning there will be the **United States Twirling Contest**, as well as the **Pony Show**. Monday evening, the Jack Krotchman thrill show will be presented before the Grandstand. Tuesday morning there will be an open class Swine Show, open Dairy Cattle Show, District Holstein Show and County Horseshoe Pitching Contest. Harness Racing will be held Tuesday night. Pony Races are also scheduled. Election of Fair Board Members whose terms have expired was scheduled for Wednesday. The Grand Parade is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. The High School Band Contest with 12 entries will be held at 1:30. Thursday will be Harness Racing, Pony Cart Races, and Running Races. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 13, 1959)*

1960

*"Mercer County Fair to Open Saturday August 13." Mercer County's 108th Annual Banner Fair promises to be bigger and better this year with a good program planned for the big event. The gates open at 7:00 A.M. on Saturday and the first item of interest will be the Junior Dairy show at 9:00. The afternoon attraction is the Horse Show. Running Races will feature the evening program. Sunday, the Parisian Hell Drivers will perform in the afternoon and evening. Children's Day will be observed on Monday when all rides will be reduced until 5:00 P.M. Monday through Thursday will be the **Elmer Hinkle Variety Show**. The Main Event will be "Around the World on a Magic Carpet, that will feature magic illusion and variety acts. **Present Officers of the Mercer County Agricultural Society are: Henry N. Miller, President; Roman J. Rose, 1st Vice President; John Frysinger, 2nd Vice President; W. F. Archer, Secretary; and John J. Fisher, Treasurer.** The Guernsey Dairy Association has built a permanent building near the Art Hall. (Mercer County Chronicle; July 28, 1960)*

1961

"Mercer County Fair, August 12-17." According to Secretary W. F. Archer, work on the Grounds is right on schedule and a few improvements have been made. Mr. Archer noted that the buildings will

Niekamp Farm & Flea Market Sponsor

again be sprayed and every necessary precaution taken to make the livestock comfortable for the duration of the Fair. An outstanding Junior Fair exhibit is expected with the largest exhibit in Fair history. Of interest will be the Elmer Hinkle Variety Show, Monday through Thursday, featuring Shirley Sandusky, the National Grand Champion Baton Twirler. The Hurricane Hell Drivers will have two shows Sunday. Also, will be racing, running races, and harness racing with Pari Mutual Wagering. The Band Contest and Horseshoe Pitching will be held. (Mercer County Chronicle; July 27, 1961)

1962

"110th Banner Fair Will Open Saturday, August 11. 4-H Exhibits to reach an all time high." Fair Board Members are optimistic about this year's Fair and the way things are stacking up, it looks like it could be a record breaker. Exhibits are running ahead of last year and more businessmen are showing their merchandise this year. Display areas in the County Garage are almost sold out. More farm machinery will be shown. At least six automobile dealers will have their cards on display. Of major interest is the Band Contest Wednesday; fourteen bands are entered. Horse Racing and Hurricane Hell drivers will furnish the evening entertainment. Uncle Orrie and Ferdy Fussbudget of TV fame will be on the Thursday afternoon program. Junior Fair Board Officers for 1962 are: Tom Howell, President; Beverly Frahm, Vice President; Diane Hein, Secretary; Robert Briner, Assistant Secretary; Patricia Langenkamp, News Reporter and John Moeller, Assistant News reporter. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 9, 1962)

1963

"Band Contest to Highlight Mercer County Fair Today." Threatening weather all day Tuesday failed to slow down the crowds that have been swarming to the Mercer County Fair Grounds. After a heavy rain on Monday evening, all operations resumed. The Grand Parade is scheduled for today. The much talked about Band Contest will take place at 1:30. Saint Henry High School Band will defend its Championship against 10 other bands. Sunday the Junior Fair Livestock Sale will include 30 steers, 112 hogs and 31 lambs. The total to be sold is 173, compared to 144 last year. Mercer County Junior Fair Royalty were King Bob Nuding and Queen Paula Shively. Attendants were Phil Rengers, Duane Sell, Cheryl Stucke and Elaine Klenz. They were crowned by last year's King and Queen, David Franzer and Pat Langenkamp. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 15, 1963)

1963

MERCER COUNTY FAIR

CELINA, OHIO

AUGUST 10th thru 15th, 1963

Running Race Program

TROPHY EACH RACE — PHOTO FINISH

Saturday Night, August 10, 1963

✓ 1/2 Mile Run	<i>Brown Dango</i>	\$250.00
✓ 3/4 Mile Run	<i>Refeld Dupleman</i>	275.00
Pony Race—44"-50"		75.00
✓ 5/8 Mile Run	<i>Celina Truck & Tractor</i>	250.00
Pony Race—50"-56"		75.00
✓ 1/2 Mile Run	<i>General Dns</i>	125.00
✓ 1 1/8 Mile Run	<i>Ed. Kuro's Cafe</i>	300.00

1963 running race program
top part of ticket

Monday Night, August 12, 1963

1/2 Mile Run	<i>Celina Bus Group</i>	\$250.00
3/4 Mile Run	<i>Hot & Less Jackson Co.</i>	275.00
Pony Race—44"-50"		75.00
5/8 Mile Run	<i>Jackson's Garage</i>	250.00
Pony Race—50"-56"		75.00
1/2 Mile Run	<i>Carl A. Wright</i>	125.00
1 1/8 Mile Run	<i>Green Belt Chem.</i>	225.00

Entries must be in by 11:00 A.M. day before race.

For information on entries, call or write to:
Superintendent of Running Races

GLEN FLORENCE, Sup't
R. R. 1, Coldwater, Ohio Phone Wabash 942-1313
W. F. ARCHER, Sec'y, Box 301, Celina, Ohio

1963 program
bottom part of ticket

Mercer County Recorder Tamara K. Barger Sponsor

1964

"112th Annual Banner Fair Ready to Roll August 15." Gooding Rides were already moving in last Saturday. According to Secretary W. F. Archer, who has moved his office to the Fair Grounds, all available space has been taken in the Highway Garage for commercial exhibits. Cattle, sheep and swine are filling up the barns. There will be the usual fine array of exhibits from our Junior Fair members, with a record number involved in 4-H and F. F. A. work. Entertainment will include the Elmer Hinkle Show, Hell Drivers, Harness and Jockey Racing and a performance by the Fort Wayne Shine Horse Patrol. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 13, 1964)

1965

"Junior Fair Group Says 'Thanks' to Generous Contains." More than \$20,700 was raised during a Fund drive to construct the new Junior Fair Building in time for the 1965 Banner Fair. Chairman Les Brandewie stated they received wonderful cooperation. (Mercer County Chronicle; July 22, 1965) Besides the new Junior Fair Building, other improvements include a new guard rail and drainage ditch around the Race Track and re-paving the main roads on the grounds. An added attraction will be a Tractor Pulling Contest. Family tickets are again selling for \$3.00, and a new feature will be the single ticket selling for \$1.50. The single ticket will entitle the bearer and his auto to the Grounds the entire length of the Fair. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 12, 1965)

1966

"114th Banner Fair to Open Gates August 13." Improvements have been made at the Fair. Several of the Hog Barns have been painted and the old Art Building was moved, and two horse barns were made out of it. Gerald Slusser, is making his debut as Fair Secretary, taking over for long time Secretary W. F. Archer. (In 1972, William Foster Archer, aged 77, passed away. The newspaper noted that he had served as Fair Secretary for about 25 years.) Commercial Exhibits have been exceptionally good, as all available space has been sold. Replacing the Hinkle Show that has appeared in the past years, is a national Variety Show, which will be free Monday through Friday. Auditions for local talent will be held Monday through Wednesday with the winner performing on Thursday evening. The winner will also go to the State Fair. Harness and Running Races will furnish evening entertainment, except Sunday evening the Hurricane Hell Drivers will perform. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 4, 1966)

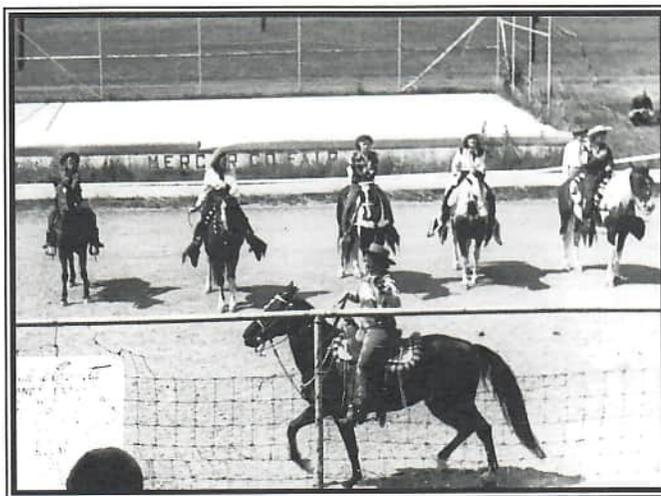
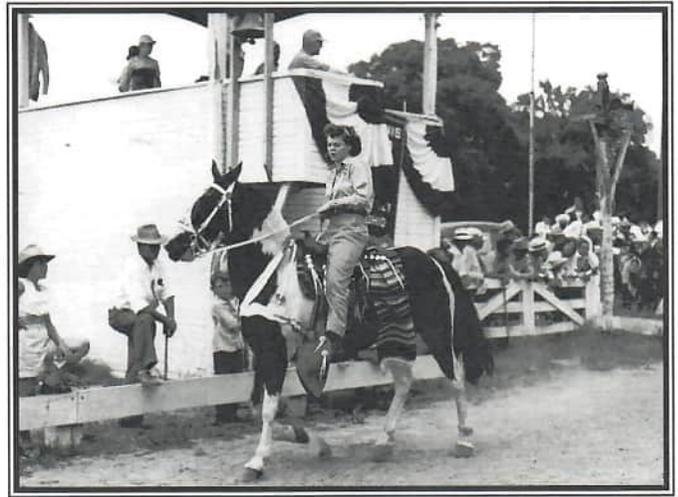


In 1966, the old Art Building was moved, and two horse barns were made out of that building. These photographs show the two horse barns in the year 2002.

**Brandewie Weber Insurance
and Financial Services** Sponsor



“Flaming Jet” with his owners Ermal and Glen Florence, Sr., and Ervin Samples, driver. When Glen Florence was a member of the Fair Board, he was in charge of the running horses at the Fair. After retiring, he became interested in harness races horses or standard bred. Glen bought “Flaming Jet,” the pinto filly, from an Amishman, and Dave Koch became her trainer. Jet raced at local county fairs, as well as Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan. Flaming Jet retired with a mark of 2:07.2h, which was a good mark at that time. Jet was a “horse of a different color!”



Florence Livestock, Inc. Sponsor

1967

"115th Banner Fair Ready to Open August 12." A Major improvement this past year was the rebuilding of the Grandstand. The whole front (box seats) is new and the rest of the Grandstand was rebuilt. According to 4-H Agent Marion Freeman, Junior Exhibits should be as good as last year. Missing from the Fair will be the Annual Band Contest; instead of the Contest, a Band Festival will be held.

A Pet Parade will be held. Harness and Running Races will again furnish evening entertainment. Sunday evening the Retroff All-Girl Auto Thrill Show will perform. Thursday the fabulous and new Stony Roberts Auto Demolition Derby will perform. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 3, 1967)

[Note: This was advertised as the 115th Banner Fair. If one would count the years that an actual fair was held, this would be the 100th Fair.]

1968

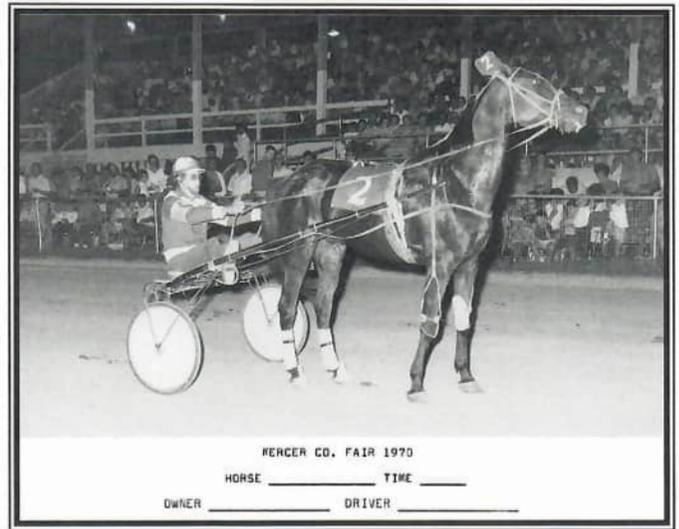
"116th Banner Fair to Open Gates August 10th." According to Fair Secretary Gerald Slusser, all indications point to another Big Fair. Several implement dealers will be there with a huge display of farm machinery. Several major improvements were noted on the Fair Grounds. **Due to ever-increasing demands for electricity, a new feeder line was installed and the process of rewiring the entire grounds is underway.** An added feature will be the Tri-County District Holstein Show. The Band Contest will be resumed after a year's absence. The Contest will be broken down into two classes, A and B; with schools having an enrollment over 350 being in Class A. Monday and Tuesday will be Children's Days with reduced rates offered youngsters on all Midway rides. **The Junior Fair Grand Parade will be held on Wednesday.** Thursday, the Fair's final day, will be highlighted by a **Horse-Shoe Pitching free-for-all, a pony pulling contest, and a Demolition Derby.** (Mercer County Chronicle; August 8, 1968)



Maurer's Hardware Sponsor



Ronald Hamilton, Superintendent of Speed Dept.
(The Driver is not identified.)
Edgewater Park Dance Hall sponsored the winner.



Mercer County Fair 1970
The horse and driver are not identified.
Were you at the track that year?

1969

"117th Banner Fair to Open Gates August 9th." According to Fair Secretary Gerald Slusser, the grounds are in shape, and other agricultural products will be on hand. Eighteen bands will participate in the Band Contest on Wednesday, with 14 Bands in the A Contest and 4 Bands in the B Contest (less than 350 students in High School). Junior Fair Officials are very optimistic. The Winners and Crowning of Queen & King will be Tuesday. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 7, 1969)

1970

"118th Banner Fair August 15 Through the 20th." The Junior Fair will have a record number of entries as the local 4-H Clubs are celebrating their 50th anniversary. Arnold Fast is serving his first year as Secretary and William J. Hoenie is the President. Harness racing will be featured four nights. The Hell Drivers will perform Sunday evening; Motorcycle Races will be on Sunday. The Demolition Derby will be Thursday night. Free entertainment at 1:30 Saturday through Thursday. Rock Nite will be held Saturday and Sunday. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 6, 1970)

1971

*"119th Banner Fair to Open Gates August 13." The Fair for the first time will run thru seven nights. According to Fair Secretary Arnold Fast all space for commercial exhibits is sold out. "We knew we will have more 4-H exhibits than ever," Fast said, "Because enrollment in 4-H is up from last year." There will be no Band Contest this year. However, **Ohio's Boys Band** will be here on Friday night and 12 area bands will play in concert the same night. An added attraction will be **Greg Shindeler**, 'The Sound Effects Teen.' He will be at the Entertainment Tent on Wednesday and will perform at the break at the Rock Night on Wednesday. Another added attraction will be **Miniature Harness Racing (Ponies)** on Saturday evening between races and **Chariot Races** between Races on Thursday evening. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 5, 1971)*

**Mercer Co. Job & Family Services,
Director Dale Borger** Sponsor

1972

"Mercer County Fair Opening Is Friday." Tickets are now being sold for Friday's performance of the Bob Braun and Paul Dixon Show. The Fair will continue through August 17, according to Charles Dilbone, new Fair Secretary. Scheduled to be at the Fair are Bruce Brownfield, Coleen Sharp, Rob Reider and Bonnie Lou. Bob Braun will be unable to attend. The Wally Moore Band of the Midwest Hay Ride will be there. A gigantic Band Festival will be held following the Bob Braun Show. Rock Nite is being sponsored by the Junior Fair. The Tri-County Tractor Pull will get underway at 10:30 A.M. Harness Racing will be Saturday night. Demolition Derbies on Sunday highlight the day's activities. The County Fire Departments will have a Water Ball Fight. Tuesday is Children's Day and Thursday is Senior Citizen's Day. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 10, 1972)

[Note: At this time the Band Contest was dropped. In its place was held a Band Festival. This developed into a Festival of Mercer County High School Bands. This also appears to be the first Fair where Senior Citizens were recognized with a special day.]

1973

"Mercer County Fair Opening Set Friday." Gates will open at 3:00 P.M. with Harness Racing at 7:30, and a Rock Performance by "Beef Jerky," at 8:30 P.M. There will be at Tri-county Tractor Pull Saturday. Sunday's highlights are an All Denominational Worship Service at 9:00 A.M. and a Demolition Derby at 2 and 8. Monday and Tuesday are Children's Days with reduced prices on rides between 1 and 5 P.M. Thursday is Senior Citizens' Day and the Band Festival with all Mercer County Bands performing at 7:30 P.M. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 9, 1973)

1974

"122nd Banner Fair Opening Friday." The Fair will continue through August 15, according to Fair Secretary Ruth Myers. The always popular County High School Band Festival has been moved to Saturday. Sunday will be two performances of Clay Hart; "Life," a popular musical and singing group; Helen and Billy Scott and the talented Sally Flynn will appear at 1:30. Hart was nominated as Country Singer of the Year in 1969, and currently is on the Lawrence Welk TV Show. "Life" is America's up and coming musical group. Sally Flynn is a former star on the Lawrence Welk Show and was a vocal partner in the Sandy and Sally Duo. Helen and Billy Scott are former stars of the Midwestern Hay Ride TV Show and currently stars of WWVA Jamboree. Monday and Tuesday are Children's Days and Wednesday is Golden Age Day for Senior Citizens. Thursday will be the world's greatest thrill spectacular dynamic Demolition Derby, featuring a \$500 cash purse and trophies. The Junior Fair is expected to be the largest ever. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 8, 1974)

1975

"123rd Banner Fair Opening Friday." The popular County High School Band Festival has been moved to Sunday afternoon. Sunday evening the musical group, The Challengers and Country Western Singer Crystal Gayle comes from a very talented family. A brother, Jay Lee Webb, and sisters Loretta Lynn and Peggy Sue are also Country Western entertainers. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 7, 1975)

In 1975, the Society obtained the building, which became the Mercer County Fair Board Secretary's Office, located west of the Grandstand. The building was an asset because the Secretary no longer had to move records from the Courthouse to an area under the Grandstand, for Fair Week.

The Coldwater Machine Company, LLC Sponsor

*"Banner Fair Ends Successful 7 Days." There were more rides and greater gate receipts according to Fair Board **President Fred Baltzell and Board Secretary Ruth Myers**. Despite several thunderstorms, the Fair attracted large crowds to all special events. Thursday, Junior Fair recorded a total of \$55,807.22, an increase over last year's total sales. **Greg Eichenauer's Grand Champion Steer** brought \$1.41 per pound, a new record over last year's \$1.08 per pound. Most sales were 20 to 30 cents higher than last year's. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 21, 1975)*

1976

"124th Banner Fair Opens Friday." Harness Racing will begin at 7:30 P.M. on Saturday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Don Fleenar's Hell Drivers and Auto Show will perform Friday with all late model cars. The Open Class Horse Show will be between 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. Sunday. At 8 P.M. the singing group "Life" will perform, along with the Medicine Show. A Talent contest will be held at 1:30 and a Western Style Square Dance at 7:30 P.M. on Wednesday. Don Fleenar's Bicentennial Medicine Show is an American Vaudeville. Highlighting the show is Dr. Bill Bilbum, descendant of one of the most famous quacks of all time. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 12, 1976)

At a special ceremony at the 1976 Mercer County Fair, the people who reorganized the Mercer County Fair in 1940 were honored: C. F. Kuhn, Carl Hawk, Emil Goettemoeller, Albert Hassan, Henry Miller, Fred Miller, and Walter Pierstorff.

1977

*"125th Fair Going Well." Periodic showers and the threat of further rain did not keep gate receipts and attendance over the weekend from surpassing last year's weekend totals. Sunday's new attraction, the fireworks, and appearance of rock band's **Frigid Pink and Wedsel's Edsels** went over well. The crowning of the Junior Fair King and Queen took place Sunday; **Bob Rose of Coldwater and Connie Post of Celina** were the honored couple. The Grand Champion Swine belongs to **Mike Ahlers of St. Henry**; the Reserve Champion to **Tom Flaute of Maria Stein**. In Showman, **Roger Rose of St. Henry**, had the Junior Champ, and **Bob Rose of Coldwater**, the Senior Champ. On Thursday the big Annual Junior Fair Livestock Sale was to begin. The Demolition Derby at 8 P.M. was to conclude this year's activities. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 18, 1977)*



Marion Mutual Insurance Association Sponsor



1978 Fair Officers, *left to right:*
 Fred Baltzell, V. President
 Ruth Myers, Sec'y/Treasurer
 Paul Bills, President



1978 Fair Board of Directors, *left to right:*
Back Row: Arnold Fast, Florence Evers, John Frahm,
 Tom Holtman, Joe Boley, Gene Counterman, Nick Kremer
Front Row: Bill Miller, Bob Humbert, Jerry Roeckner,
 Wally Klosterman, Gordon Hayes, and Al Link.

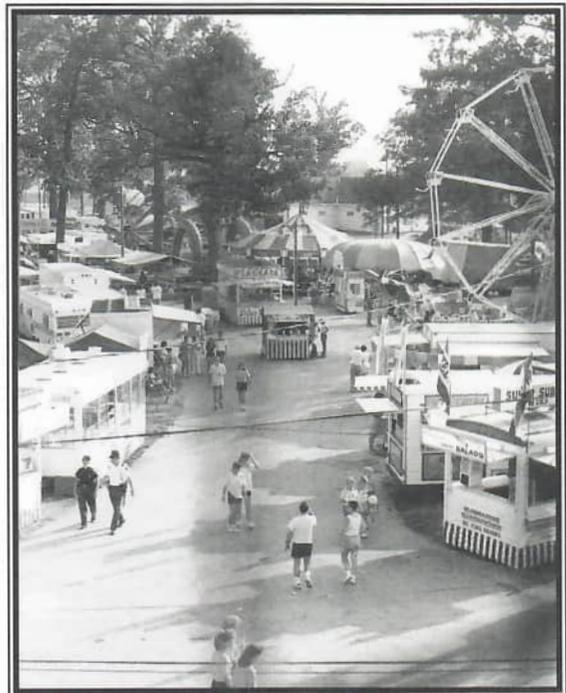
1978

"126th County Fair to Open Friday." Step right up everybody, it's Fair Time! A new feature will be the Conversion Van Show Saturday. Another new attraction will be a Softball Game Saturday, with the Mercer County Sheriff's Department tangling with WDTV-TV All Stars from Dayton. Action packed Motorcycle Races will again be held this year. Appearing for the second straight year will be Wedsel's Edsels, a group specializing in music and style of the fifties. Also back is Sunny Amusement, Inc. with 15 different rides and shows and 10 game concessions. Ride tickets will cost \$2.50 for a strip of ten. On Tuesday and Thursday, there will be unlimited rides from 1-5 for only \$3. There will be plenty of Harness Racing with a total purse of \$30,000 offered. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 10, 1978)

The Midway at the 1978 Mercer County Fair

The rides of the Ferris Wheel, the Merry-Go-Round, the Tilt-o-Whirl, the roller coaster, the ponies, and other rides, all bring back memories.

The Food of the Fair sent delicious scents down the Midway: peanuts, candy popcorn, corn dogs, root beer, French fried dill pickles, lemon shake up, waffles, cotton candy, taffy, elephant ears, pizzas, whole hog sausage sandwiches, bloomin-onions, fried veggies, ice cream cones, subs, salads, and hamburgers with pickles & onions.



Mercer County Treasurer
Doris Rutschilling Sponsor

1979

*"County fair Organizers Babbling Over Response." Those attending the Fair apparently approved of the new attractions to the Fair, as the Grandstand was nearly full for the Horse Pull and revenue on rides from a new company (**Carpenter Rides**) were reported up from previous years. Sunday, traditionally attracting disappointing crowds, drew an estimated 1500 for the Horse Pull Events. The Event which attracted horse owners from Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio, has sparked talk among Fair organizers of continuing the event and even expanding it, possibly turning it into a national event. Perhaps, the major attraction of the Fair was the Junior Fair Livestock Competition. Twelve year old **Mike Fennig of Coldwater took the Grand Champion Steer** honors at the Fair. His steer, named Red, was a 1,175 pound Hereford-Simental Cross. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 16, 1979)*

1980

*"Weather Curbs Zeal, Receipts, at Fair." Rain fell on Fair goers during the first five days of the 128th Banner Fair, but receipts are comparable to 1979, reports **Fair Board Secretary Sharon LaRue**. Storms not only soaked visitors, but battered tents at the Fair. Poles were broken and ropes were torn, but no tents collapsed, reported LaRue. For the second year attendance at the **Ohio State Championship Horse Pull** was high. LaRue estimated that 2,100 paid to watch the competition.*

*(Mercer County Chronicle; August 14, 1980) "Rentz Steer Brings Record Price." For the second consecutive year, **Dale Suhr of Casey Jones Steak House** paid a record amount for the **Grand Champion Steer** at the Junior Fair. Suhr paid an average of \$1.44 1/2 cents per pound for "Rex," a 1,140 pound steer raised by **Sheri Rentz of Coldwater**. A record price for **Grand Champion Market Lamb** was tied when Fort Recovery Exchange paid \$4 a pound for a lamb owned by **Mark Fullenkamp**. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 21, 1980)*



In 1980, the 4-H Members were working on their Junior Fair Project in Genealogy, the Study of their Mercer County Family Heritage. Joyce Alig, Director of the Mercer County Historical Museum held classes at the Historical Museum, in Genealogical Research, for the 4-H Members and Advisors.

Kneeling: Marie Dues, Teresa Ontrop, Alvera Schmitz, Kathy Sieftring and Michelle Sieftring.

Second Row: Joyce Alig, (Museum Director), Nancy Evers, Julia Schmitmeyer, Josie Dahlinghaus, Karen Schenking, Sandy Borgerding, Rose Ann Sieftring

Back Row: Louise Hileman (Museum Volunteer), Mary Lou Evers, Rita Schmitmeyer and Kathy Schenking.



Mercer County Civic Foundation Sponsor

1981

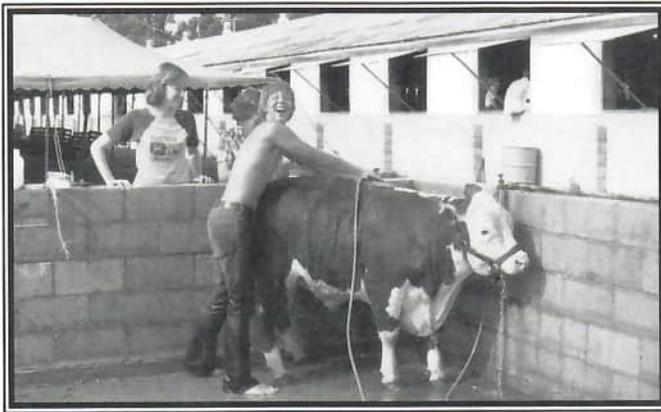
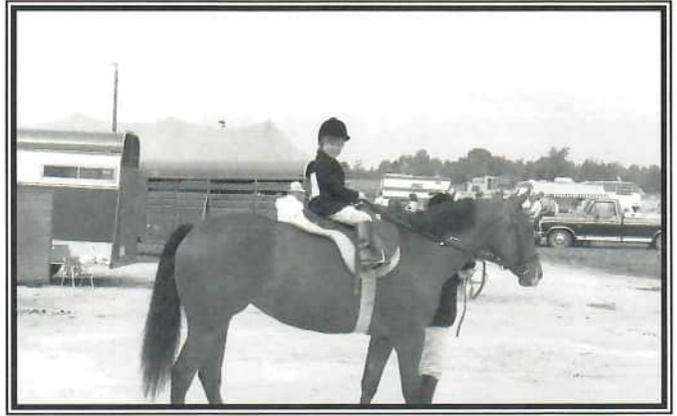
"129th Mercer County Fair August 14-20." *Step Right Up—it's Fair time!*" Sharon LaRue, Fair Secretary, said the annual event is shaping up well. Participation in Junior Fair events is up almost 10% according to **County Extension Agent Lori Wunderlich**. There are 99 hogs, 110 dairy cattle, 47 beef cattle, 59 sheep, 62 horses, 22 rabbits, and 18 poultry exhibits entered. Over 1700 4-H Members representing 60 clubs will be represented in the 4-H Building. New events at the fair include a **Tug-O-War, Women's Programs, and a Professional Frisbee Exhibition**. On Wednesday Representatives from Greenscape Garden Center will present **Landscaping Tips**. Sunday night after the Horse Pull, the Desert Band will perform free at the Grandstand. Saturday's attractions include an **Open class Horse Show at the new Horse Arena, the Junior Fair Tractor Rodeo, and Harness Horses** will once again go to the post at 7:30 P.M. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 13, 1981)

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MERCER COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY — 1981**

RECEIPTS (Nov. 1, 1980 thru Oct. 31, 1981)

Daily Gate Admissions	\$ 26,634.00
Grandstand Admissions	16,194.00
Sale of Memberships	105.00
Season Ticket Sales	14,912.00
Exhibitor Ticket Sales	4,782.00
Income from Concessions	30,996.24
Class Entry Fees	1,069.25
Contest Entry Fees	940.00
Speed Receipts:	
Horsemen's Fees—\$6,980.00	
Parimutuel Receipts—\$5,029.12	
Nominating & Sustaining Fees—\$6,800.00	18,809.12
State Aid:	
Ohio Fairs Fund—\$28,752.00	
Junior Fair Subsidy—\$1,947.00	30,699.00
County Aid	30,000.00
Sales	1,770.39
Income from advertising	—0—
Short Term Rentals	19,176.50
Long Term Rentals	18,912.94
Income from Interest	484.87
Money Borrowed during this Period	25,000.00
Refunds	1,818.11
Miscellaneous Income	2,208.99
Total Receipts for the period covered by this Report	244,571.42
Balance in Treasury, beginning this period	8,969.91

GRAND TOTAL OF RECEIPTS AND CARRY-OVER
FROM 1980



Niekamp's Circle N—Roger & Pat & Family Sponsors

1982

*"130th Banner Fair August 13-19." Almost 2,000 County 4-Hers will be displaying livestock and other modeling projects. The Fair will officially open Friday and a big, new event is on tap for Friday night. Fair officials have brought the **all-girl Chicago Knockers Mud Wrestling Team** to the Grandstand for an 8:00 P.M. Exhibition. Officials are also recruiting amateur wrestlers to fight the Chicago Knockers. Other new attractions will include a **Microwave Cooking School, and a talk on Couponing and Refunding**. Children's days are Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday; they can ride all day for one price. Other highlights include **Harness Racing with Pari Mutual Betting**. **Weekly Tickets for the Fair are \$5 in advance and \$6 at the Gate; Single is \$2.** (Mercer County Chronicle; August 12, 1982)*

1982 Fair Judging Schedule: Aug. 12: Jr. Fair shop, General Exhibits & Grange; Aug. 13: Jr. Fair Foods at Jr. Fair Activity Tent; Floral Department at Agricultural Hall; Aug. 14: Agricultural Products, Household Products, Fine Arts & Painting at Commercial Building, Advanced Jr. Fair Foods, Domestics; August 15: Open Class Horse Show in New Horse Arena, Open Class Dairy Goat Show; August 16: Jr. Fair Swine Show at Swine Arena, Jr. Fair Horse Show at Horse Arena, Open Class Dairy (Brown Swiss, Jersey, Ayrshire and Holstein) at new Cattle Arena, Floral Department, Open Class Beef Cattle, Jr. Fair Beef Show, Jr. Modeling Revue, Foods and Clothes at Jr. Fair Activity Tent; Aug. 17: Open Class Ponies at new Horse Arena, Barrow Classes at Swine Arena, Jr. Fair Sheep Show and Dairy Show and Goat Show, Open Class Sheep; Aug. 18: Western Ohio Guernsey Show at new Cattle Arena, Jr. Fair Poultry Show and Rabbit Show.

1982 Fair Activities: Aug. 13: Mud Wrestling; Aug. 14: Jr. Fair Tractor Rodeo, Harness Racing, Talk on Couponing, Tug-of-War, Harness Racing; Aug. 15: Horseshoe Pitching, Band Festival and Horse Pull at the Grandstand; Aug. 16: Talent Contest at Grandstand, Harness Racing, Spiritual Service "The Miracles;" Aug. 17: Horseshoe Pitching, Clothing Revue at Jr. Fair Activity Tent, Senior Citizens Program at Entertainment Tent, Pony Races, Advanced Clothing Revue, Harness Racing, and Jr. Fair Dance, "Disco Z;" Aug. 18: Jr. Fair Parade in front of Grandstand, Children's Contest, Micro Wave Cooking School, Western Style Square Dancing, Harness Racing, Jr. Fair Intermediate and Senior Modeling Revue (Foods and Clothing); Aug. 19: Outstanding Projects Awards, Outstanding 4-H Boy and Girl Awards, State Fair Winners announced, 4-H Adult Fashion Show (4-H Advisors and 4-H Alumni), Demo Derby, Jr. Fair Livestock Sale.

Note: Junior Fair includes 4-H, Juvenile Grange, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownie Scouts, Junior Scouts, Cadette Division, Senior Scouts, Home Economics or F. H. A. (Future Homemakers of America), F. F. A. (Future Farmers of America), and Farm Bureau Youth Council.

1983

*"131st Banner Fair Receipts Match 1982." Gate Receipts for the Fair are running close to figures from last year, according to **Jeannie May, assistant to Fair Treasurer Jerry Heiby**. "We seem to have sold more weekly passes prior to the Fair, so our daily passes are down slightly from last year," stated Miss May. Miss May added that there are considerably more exhibitors at this Fair. She also pointed out that there are more attending the various shows during the Fair. The number of Senior Citizens (over 60) admitted to the grounds at no charge Tuesday, was 1,689. This marks the first year the attendance figure is recorded, Miss May said. A total of 1300 persons attended the Sunday Band Festival, which included bands from Ansonia, Arcanum, Celina, Mendon, Greenville, Parkway, Marion Local, Ohio City, Fort Recovery, and Coldwater. No figures have been released on Grandstand receipts from other shows, although attendance appears to be up from 1982. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 18, 1983)*

Lefeld Welding Sponsor

1984

"Television's Ed Johnson Plans Banner Fair Appearance." Ed Johnson, weekly host of Television's "Agri-Country," will make an appearance at the Fair, August 15. Considered Ohio's ambassador for agriculture, Johnson travels in and out of state over 100 times annually on speaking engagements and personal appearances for ABN Radio and Television. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 2, 1984)

"132nd Banner Fair Starts Friday." No one should miss it! It promises to be the best ever. The Fair will end its week long run Thursday, following the bust-'em-up, crack-'em-up Demolition Derby, one of the Fair's most popular events. A number of special days will be featured. Saturday will be "Handicapped and Special Children's Day. Science, Art, 4-H, and F.F.A. Day is set for Sunday. Monday will be Agronomy and Horticulture Day, as well as Children's Day. Tuesday is Golden Age Day. Thursday is Veterans and Public Service Day. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 9, 1984)

1985

*"Banner Fair Opens Friday." Monty Heiby and Janet Gross will reign over this year's Junior Fair, part of the Banner Fair Opening Friday. Harness Racing is on tap at 7:30 P. M. **E Z Rider** will be featured at the Entertainment Tent. Saturday will begin with a new event at 8 A.M., an American **Shetland Pony Show**. Monday will have a **Diaper Derby**. The Fair will close August 15, with the Junior Fair Livestock Auction and Demolition Derby. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 8, 1985)*

*"Fair Attendance Up." Weather and the ride company cooperated to boost attendance at the Banner Fair far above last year's totals. **Otterbacher Amusement Corp.** made it on time this year according to fair officials and played a big part in the attendance jump. Daily attendance on Monday was 963 and Tuesday's was 759, reported **Secretary Barb Thees**. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 15, 1985)*

1986

In May 1986, there was a fire at the Horse Barns on the Fair Ground.

*"Mercer County Banner Fair Begins Friday." Gates will open at 3:00 P.M. Friday. Weekly tickets will be sold for \$7 before that time and \$8 after. Daily tickets will be \$2.50 and youngsters under 15 are admitted free. According to Barb Thees, Secretary of the Mercer County Agricultural Society (Fair Board), many old favorites and a few new events will be at this year's Fair. The Otterbacher Amusement Corp. will provide the rides. Other annual popular attractions include four nights of Harness Racing, the High School Band Contest, A Sunday evening Horse Pull, and a favorite finale—the Demolition Derby on Thursday night. New attractions include a **Basket-weaving demonstration and a tole painting demonstration**. A number of free contests and assorted entertainment will be featured at the Entertainment Tent. Mime Ricker Womer will perform on Friday, and on Saturday will be a **Baby Contest** for various age groups. A **Greased Watermelon Contest "pitting," the Junior and Senior Fair Boards will be held at 8:00 P.M. Saturday.** (Mercer County Chronicle; August 6, 1986)*

A Greased Watermelon Contest, pitting the Junior and Senior Fair Boards, was held during the 1986 Mercer County Fair. Bill Kill, with the watermelon, was stepping through the rear tire of a John Deere Tractor from Lefeld Implement. _____ on left; Virgil Nedderman on right.



Lefeld Implement, Inc.
Coldwater & Willshire Sponsors

1987

"Fair Progressing smoothly." Extremely hot temperatures kept Fair goers slightly below last year's attendance figures for the first two days. On Monday evening Eddie Ebbing of Philothea took both Grand Champion and Reserve Champion honors in the Junior Fair Beef Show. On Monday 951 patrons purchased daily gate tickets, "down a little," from last year's Monday gate. Grandstand attendance for the evening card of Harness Racing was 499, "up a little," from last year, Secretary Barb Thees said. The Fair got off to a sizzling start Friday when the **Track Pacing Record was broken. Miz Ruby, owned by H. R. Dick of Monroe, Michigan and Rick Irvin of Dublin, set a record of 2:01.2.** The Demolition Derby will conclude the Fair. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 19, 1987)

1988

[Note: With the Village of Coldwater celebrating its Sesquicentennial (1838-1988), the *Mercer County Chronicle* put all of its emphasis on the local celebration.] The front page of the August 18th edition (during the Fair) was made up of photographs taken at the Fair, but no write up about the Fair. The two largest photographs were of **well-known singer, Marie Osmond**, charming the audience during Sunday's Grandstand Show, and the **Junior Fair King Steve Werling and Queen Deb Rosenbeck.** The August 25th edition of the *Mercer County Chronicle* had a Section of 8 pages, of **photographs at the Fair** and photographs of the different award winners—most of which were taken by **Buck Hall.**]



Bob Berry and Singer Marie Osmond,
at the 1988 Mercer County Fair.



Ian Jacob Walter
at the County Fair.



Babies Eric Robert Watson
and Caitlyn Klosterman
with their Mothers

1989

"Mercer County announces Ticket Information." It was announced that 1989 Membership tickets are available at a cost of \$9.00 for a person to enter, to exhibit and to vote for the Fair Board (if 17 years of age). After the Fair begins, weekly tickets can be purchased at the gate for \$9.00. The cost will be an additional \$2.75 per day to ride mechanical rides all day. Adult daily tickets are \$4.00 which includes rides. Children, 2 years and under, are admitted free. Special pricing includes Demolition Derby Box Seats (\$3.00), Band Festival Box Seats (\$1.00), and Harness Racing Box Seats (\$1.00). Children 2 years and under will pay \$2.00 if they wish to ride. Children 3-11 will pay a \$2.00 gate admission and ages 12 and over will pay \$4.00. These prices include all mechanical rides and Grandstand admission (except for the special events listed). Tickets for the **Statler Brothers Shows** to be held on Sunday are \$10.00 for reserved Grandstand and \$12.00 reserved track. Box seats are completely sold out. Sunday is **Mud Bog Competition.** (Mercer County Chronicle; July 13, 1989)

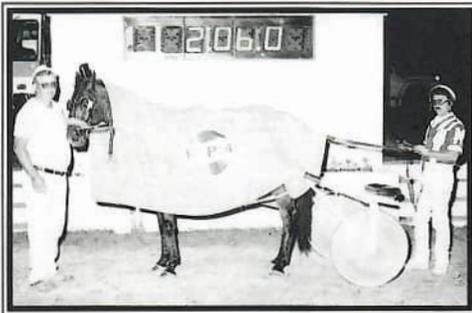
All Attendance and Grandstand Records were broken at this 1989 Mercer County Banner Fair.

Seitz Electric, Inc. Sponsor



The Statler Brothers Shows broke all Grandstand Records. Over \$62,000 worth of tickets were sold for the Statler Brothers Shows on Sunday, at the 1989 Mercer County Banner Fair.

At their September 1989 Board of Directors' Meeting, the Board awarded a contract to Michael's Insulation and Roofing at St. Henry, to replace the Fair Grounds' aging Grandstand roof. Two years ago, after District Fire Marshal Punk Zweibel found the roof to be "under greater than allowable stress," the Commissioners ordered reinforcement or replacement of the structure while preparing to undertake a complete roof replacement. (*Daily Standard*; September 18, 1989) At their October 1989 Board of Directors' Meeting, the board also offered a home to **Celina's South Main Street Norfolk an Southern Railroad Depot**, currently facing demolition if no one claims it. If a group moved the depot and donated money to restore it, board members agreed, it would be a welcome Fair Grounds addition. (*Daily Standard*; October 4, 1989) [Note: No one funded the Depot's removal and it was dismantled.]



'Frostie Crombie,' owned by Jim Ellis; Mike Rosengarten, driver. 1989



'L. L. Sun' owned by Paul Peterson; Jim Powers, driver. 1989



The Eyink's Award - Fiddle Banjo Contest 1989

Rockford Construction Services Sponsor

1990

"Daniels/Haggard Schedule County Fair Performances." Country Music Legends, Merle Haggard and the Charlie Daniels Band will headline a concert at the Mercer County Fair on Sunday August 12. The Charlie Daniels Band's "Decade of Hits," has sold over 500,000 copies. Haggard made his singing debut at the age of 15 on a Lefty Frizzel show. Haggard's first million seller was "Okie from Muskogee." (Mercer County Chronicle; August 2, 1990.)

*"The Fair, Charlie Daniels, and Me." One of the highlights of this year's Fair was the performance of Merle Haggard and Charlie Daniels. The large crowds that attended both shows were not disappointed even though it rained during the last half of the second show. On Saturday evening there was a new **Pace Track Record set. Luxury King came to the finish line in a record time of 1:02.** Tuesday evening was the first year for the **Veterans' Day Program.** About 300 attended the Memorial Services conducted by **Maria Stein Post 571. The 1990 Junior Fair King was Tom Rammel and the Queen was Maggie Rammel.** (Mercer County Chronicle; August 16, 1990) [Note: After the Civil War and the Spanish American War, the Fair sponsored "Old Soldiers' Day." See also, the year 1907.]*

1991

*"Fair, August 9-15." Mark Chesnutt will be appearing at the Fair and open the show for the **Bellamy Brothers**, on Sunday August 11. Tickets are \$9.00 (track and box seating); \$7.00 (Reserved Grandstand), in addition to \$3.00 Fair Admission. (Mercer County Chronicle; July 24-30, 1991)*

*"Welcome to the Banner Fair." The Entertainment Tent was a very popular place. There was the **Quartet Sh-Boom** and the **Singing Cowboys**, who preserve in song the heritage of the Great American Cowboy. There was also the **Fox Brothers and the Full House Group** that brought you "Bluegrass Music." (Mercer County Chronicle; August 7-13, 1991)*

Other 1991 Programs. August 9: Cheerleading Show, and Jess King & Country Gospel; August 10: Mercer Co. Horseshoe Pitch, Dairy Carnival Day, Horse Show, Marko the Magic Clown, Lumberjack Show; August 11: Pork Producers Queen Contest, Mud Bog, Draft Horse and Pony Show; August 12: Veteran's Day, Diaper Derby, Harness Racing, Soundwaves Barbershop Music; August 13: Sunshine Singers, Southern Gospel; August 14: Showman of Showmen contest, Frog Jumping and Rooster Crowing Contest, Kiddie Tractor Pull, Holy Day Mass, Square Dancing; August 15: Demolition Derby. (In May, Miami Valley Airstream camped at the Fair Grounds.)



Sherri Lamm, 1990
Mercer Co. Pork Queen



Jess King & Country Gospel
performing at the Fair, 1991



Miami Valley Airstream, May 1991
Camping at the Fair Grounds

Bruns Building and Development Sponsor



Dixie Gold and Mark Chesnutt performed at the Mercer County Banner Fair.

1992

"Mercer County Fair Offers a Variety of Entertainment." All types of exhibits, from farm animals to home arts, will be at the Fair. Entertainment at the Fair is free with paid entrance to the Fair. Performances by Sh-Boom, The Fox Brothers, Midnight Prowler, Dixie Gold and Comedian Rick Reader, among others, are guaranteed to knock your socks off! (Mercer County Chronicle; August 12-18, 1992.

"Mercer County Fair Off to a Good Start." Gate receipts were up Friday night, said Fair Board Secretary Barb Thees. Adult weekly passes totaled \$3700 and Junior weekly passes totaled \$400. Gate receipts for the day was \$3,546, up \$166 from last year. On Saturday, 2088 adults visited the Fair, netting \$6,264. Sunday, 3,101 adults entered the gates, totaling \$9,303. A large number of children under 11 have not been counted as they were admitted free, opposed to the paying \$1 at the gate last year. Thees estimated that over 2000 people attended the Sh-Boom Concert Sunday night. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 19-25, 1992)

1993

"County Fair Kicks off 141st Year." The Fair opened on Friday and the weather was great. Saturday, 2074 adult tickets were sold and 635 children's. Sunday's ticket sales numbered 3748 adults and 940 children's. On Saturday 119 weekly adult passes and 48 children's were sold. These numbers do not count 4-H passes there were sold in July. On Sunday evening the Statler Brothers performed. Over \$40,000 in tickets were sold. Thursday's activities include the Demolition Derby, including a new mini-car class, a K-9 Demonstration and Destination Jazz. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 18-24, 1993)

"Mercer County Junior Fair Auction sets New Record." The Junior Fair Auction raised over \$98,000, up from last year's total of \$82,067.96. A gallon of milk sold for \$2400 up from last year's \$1600. The cow is owned by Doug Smith of Celina. The Grand Champion Steer, owned by Rick Zahn, went for \$2 a pound, totaling \$2,490. For the week were, 9,353 adult admissions, with 806 senior citizens, and 2,886 children's. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 25-31, 1993)

Sutter Brothers, Ltd. Sponsor



1994

"Hank Williams Jr. Headlines Fair." Billed as the entertainment event of the year, no show of this caliber has ever graced Mercer County or this part of Ohio. This year, the Fair will kick off on Monday, August 8, at 3:00 P.M. with admission free for the afternoon and evening. The highlight of the evening will be the Demolition Derby with over \$1700 in prizes. **Tuesday will be the first DARE DAY**, all kids wearing DARE T-Shirts will be admitted free until 5:00 P.M. Tuesday is also Golden Age Day, with \$1 admission for Senior Citizens. The **Fox Brothers** will perform and there will be a K-9 demonstration. Wednesday is Kid's Day with activities starting at 9 A.M.—**Bubble Gum, Rooster Crowing and Frog Jumping** contests will be held. A **Kiddie Tractor Pull** will be at 2:30. The Annual Band Festival will be held Wednesday at 7:00 P.M.; there will be a charge. Thursday is **Veterans' Day**; all Veterans, spouses and unmarried children are free. A Special Program will be held at 6 P.M. On Friday Harmony Encounter will be at the Entertainment Tent. **Joel Frysinger** will perform. Saturday will host two **Hank Williams Jr. Shows**. Sunday is wrap-up day. A new event is the **Motorcycle Races**.

(Mercer County Chronicle; August 3-9, 1994) [Note: The Fair Board made major changes this year, by opening the Fair on Monday rather than Friday, and closing it on Sunday rather than Thursday. This also meant almost reorganizing the Fair, as many schedule changes were made.]

The Agricultural Barn, at the Mercer County Fair Ground, in 1993.

This building caught fire by accident, the second week of October, 1994. The next day, workers demolished the building.

Daily Standard; October 18, 1994.



Stachler Concrete Construction, Inc. Sponsor

1995

"Mercer County Fair to Kick Off Monday." This year's headline will be a night of the 50's and 60's Rock and Roll performers, Bobby Vee, The Van Dells, and the Coasters. Bring your own lawn chairs. A Dance Floor will be provided. Monday evening is the Band Show and Junior Fair King and Queen Contest. A new event will be the "First Annual Cheerleading Competition," on Tuesday. Thursday is Veterans' Day. The Stan Sterner Orchestra will bring the big band music. Saturday is Kid's Day, and the Annual Baby Contest. Sunday will be a Tractor Pull and the 4-Wheel drive Mud Bog. The Fair will end Monday with the Annual Demolition Derby. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 2-8, 1995)

[Note: This was the first 8 day Fair. It opened Monday August 7 and closed on Monday, August 14.]

The **1995-1996 Fair Board Committees** included: Executive, Advertising, Audit, Building and Grounds, Stall, Finance and Planning, Ag Hall/Grange, Antique Machinery, ATV Pull/Garden/Mud Bog, Band Festival, Commercial, Concessions and Midway, Camping, Dairy, Demo Derby, Draft Horses and Ponies, Entertainment, Farm Machinery and Lawn Mowers, Floral, Gates, Goats, Grandstand, Horseshoe Pitch, Parking, Poultry, Rabbits, Rest Rooms, Security, Sheep, Speed, Swine, and Kids Games.

1996

"Bryan White Concert a Success." The 144th Annual Mercer County Fair got off to a great start, with Bryan White's Concert. Popular with the teenagers, White's performance brought the girls to their feet. 23,000 people attended the concert, with over \$30,000 in ticket sales. (Mercer County Chronicle, August 7-13, 1996) The week's activities included **Kids' Karate Demonstration, Kids' Aerobic**

Demonstration, Unlimited's Country and Oldies Show, Talent Contest, Annual Junior Fair Livestock Auction, County Horseshoe Pitch, and the Bumblebees. Wrapping up the Fair on Sunday were the **Fox Brothers**, and **Tammy Hemmelgarn** performing Contemporary and Gospel Music.

After the 1996 Fiscal Year, **Fair Secretary Lisa Gagnon** presented a Financial Statement of total cash receipts being \$324,063.71, and \$322,743.97 total disbursements, with an ending balance of \$9,083.26.

In 1996, Johnny Mapus passed away; he had hosted the Grandmother Prophecy Machine at the Arcade, with the crystal ball and fortune cards. (That machine was made famous in the movie with Tom Hanks.)

1997

"Mercer County Fair to Headline Mark Wills and the Buffalo Club Saturday evening." The Buffalo Club stands on high ground in the world of Modern Country. The Trio's music has rich harmonies of Ron Hemby, lead singer; Charlie Kelly, guitarist; and drummer John Dittrich. The Junior Fair King and Queen Contest will be opening day. The contestants will be used using criteria based on the Ohio State Fair Queen Contest. All official youth organizations in Mercer County are eligible to compete. Contestants must be 16-19 as of January 1, 1997. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 6-12, 1997)



The Fox Brothers



The Buffalo Club

Saint Henry Tile Co., Inc. Sponsor

1998

In April 1998, the Fair Board voted to allow Fast Track Racing Inc, to use the Fair Grounds and its horse-racing track May 23-24, for an amateur/semi-professional motorcycle race. The last motorcycle race at the Fair Grounds was in 1996. They voted to earmark profits from the Ohio High School Rodeo in June at the Fair Grounds, for improving the Horse Show Arena. They also voted to not sponsor a County Fair page in the book commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Mercer County Courthouse, published by the Mercer County Historical Society. (This vote was later overturned.) They voted to renew the Board's insurance contract with a Toledo firm, for \$6,898. (*Daily Standard*; April 9, 1998)

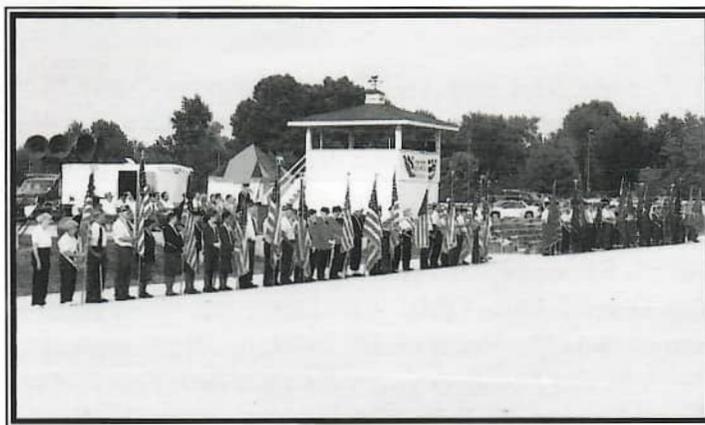
"Time and Much Effort Given By Task Force." Better than a year ago, almost three dozen people across Mercer County began meetings on a regular basis with two goals in mind: to improve the Mercer County Fair, and to make better use of the Fair Grounds throughout the year. This group became the **Mercer County Fair Task Force**. Their 1998 theme was "Rediscover the Fair, August 13-20." Some changes were made. First, \$40,000 has been raised from county businesses. The number of Fair days has been increased to eight. **Community Volunteers rewired and put a new roof on the cattle barn.** This year's Fair has new vendors, a new Ride company, volleyball, and 3 on 3 tournaments, a Racing Car display, and a pie and cookie contest. **One Main Event will be Rebecca St. James, internationally famous Christian Contemporary Music concert. Another event will be Bull Riding and Barrel Racing.** (*Mercer County Chronicle*; August 13-19, 1998)

1999

"Mercer County Fair Opens with a Bang!" The Fair opened August 10, with the ever popular Demolition Derby, and closed with the crowning of **Junior Fair Queen Melanie Powell and King Dan Wuebker**. "The amusement rides had something for everyone; the Midway was very, very crowded," stated **Fair Secretary Ginny Miller**. (*Mercer County Chronicle*; August 12-18, 1999) "Wrestling Rocks at the Fair!" Gold lame, spangled tights and feathers boas were prominently on display at the Fair. Was this the latest beauty contest? No! Professional Wrestling. **Celina Randy Mullins** whose stage name is Tiny Mite Mullins, is also known as TNT. He has wrestled on the professional circuit for seven years. (*Mercer County Chronicle*; August 19-25)



Racing at the 1999 Mercer County Fair



Veterans' Day Services at the 1999 Mercer County Fair

Saint Henry Bank
Saint Henry and Maria Stein Sponsor

Mercer County Agricultural Society President Larry Bowers received a check for \$75,000 from the State Agricultural Secretary Director Fred Dailey, from the State of Ohio Fairgrounds Capital Improvements Grant, January 5, 2000.



2000

*"Mercer County Banner Fair Breaks Attendance Records." Fair Secretary Ginny Miller estimated that 15,000 more came to the Fair this year than the previous year. The **Truck and Tractor Pull** also drew a large crowd. The **Demolition Derby** was unbelievable with people sitting in the aisles. The crowds led to parking problems. Some parked in the Mud Bog. (Mercer County Chronicle; August 17-23, 2000)*



Grand Lake Sound Waves at the Fair, 2000



Annual Band Festival at the Fair 2000



Pulling Contest at the Fair, 2000



Fly over by 180th Fighter Wings
Ohio National Guard, 2001

2001

Before the 2001 Fair, Fair Board Secretary Ginny Miller sent a letter to Fair supporters, stating that some of the improvements accomplished in the previous three years were paving of the roads through the Fair Grounds, renovation of both cattle barns, new restroom and shower facilities that are handicapped accessible, renovation of one horse barn, electrical improvements throughout the grounds, new fencing on the horse arena and a new wash rack for the horses. **For the 2001 Fair, Lyn Medaugh and James W. Yaney, Sr., organized the Fly Over by the 180th Fighter Wings Ohio Air National Guard, with F-16 Jets from Toledo, Ohio.** The Domestic, Household, Agricultural and Floral displays, the Livestock Shows, 4-H Demonstrations, strolling entertainers, and Grandstand events are held annually.

"Fair Board Finalizes Plans for the 149th Fair." The schedule of events, August 7-13, is as follows: Tues., Fair opens, Demo Derby; Wed., Kids Day/Dare Day, Band Show; Thurs., Veterans' Day and Senior Citizens' Day, Handicapped Ride Special, Cheerleading Contest, Veterans' Ceremony, Truck and Farm Stock Tractor Pull; Fri., Harness Racing; Sat., Child Safety Day, Mud Racing, Harness Racing; Sun., Family Day, Demo Derby; Mon., Last Blast Day, Harness Racing. (Mercer County Chronicle; June 21-27, 2001) [Note: The Fair went back to seven days, instead of eight days.]

Yaney's Sharpening Service Sponsor

2002

This 2002 Mercer County Banner Fair will be the 150th Anniversary of the Mercer County Fair. The First Fair was a one day Fair in 1852. **Mercer County Agricultural Society Secretary Denise Cummins** reported the 150th Mercer County Fair will be held on August 6-12, 2002. Throughout the year, the Fair Board Members worked to get the Fair Grounds ready for this Fair.

*The bulldozer leveled the third of five animal barns at the Mercer County Fairgrounds. (Daily Standard; March 21, 2002.) At the regular April Fair Board meeting, **President Bob Geist** walked the board through all the tentative events. They agreed to the Junior Fair Board's request to operate a Dunk Tank at the Fair to help cover expenses of the annual Junior Fair Banquet. They approved a contract for the truck and tractor pulling contest. (Mercer County Chronicle; April 18, 2002)*

In March 2002, the **Mercer County Fair Long Range Planning Committee** made plans for the 2002 fair. **Committee Chairman Tom Knapke**, updated the Board that construction plans prepared by **Fanning/Howey Associates, Inc.** were approved in Columbus on March 5. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$215,000 with nearly \$150,000 raised. The old sheep and swine barns are gone and the two new facilities will be ready for use at the upcoming 150th Mercer County Banner Fair. Each new building is 60' x 168' and will be available for community and special use as well as for the Fair. **Knapke assured the Board and the public that the large old oak tree, estimated at over 300 years, will remain.** (Mercer County Chronicle; March 21, 2002) **Fair Board Director Mike Niekamp**, who heads up the **150th Anniversary Committee**, said that events are falling into place for this year's Sesquicentennial celebration. Niekamp said, "We will have a spectacular Lazer Light Show, a 150th Anniversary keepsake woven throw, a special keepsake edition of the Fair book, and a collectors' book, 'Mercer County Fair, Celina, Ohio, 1852-2002,' prepared by the Mercer County Historical Society, **Fran Guilbault**, Volunteer, and **Joyce L. Alig**, Director of the Mercer County Historical Museum." (Daily Standard; May 9, 2002) Additional entertainment will be held throughout the Fair. Sharon Bertke will be singing in the Entertainment Tent, Sunday August 11th. Seymore; Teddy Trooper; Chip; Holla, the Hippo; McGruff; Edd E. Foxx, and Big Jim will be strolling the grounds August 7th.



Ken Knapke assured the public that the large old oak tree, estimated at over 300 years, will remain by the new building, in 2002.



Fraternal Order of Police building Grand Lake Lodge Number 19, is used for public exhibits during The Mercer County Banner Fair.

Fanning/Howey Associates, Inc. Sponsors



Ruth Anne Foote, Chair
Extension Agent, Family &
Consumer Sciences



Joe Beiler, Extension Agent
Agriculture & Community
Development

The concept of an Extension teaching system in Ohio was first established in 1905 by A. B. Graham, who was named the first Superintendent of Extension at Ohio State University. A bill passed by the state legislature in 1909 designated agricultural teaching throughout the state be conducted by means of meetings in the counties, demonstrations and instructions at county fairs, institutes, Granges and clubs, instruction by mail, and published bulletins. Agricultural trains provided the method to reach rural communities during the years 1906 to 1913. Nationally the Cooperative Extension Service was officially begun with President Woodrow Wilson's signature on the Smith-Lever Act in 1914.

Likewise, Extension teaching in Mercer County was conducted with such programs—meetings in home, churches, barns, fields, Ganges, county fairs, and 4-H clubs. George F. Henning, in 1920 provided the first agricultural training in the county as Farm Bureau agent. In 1924, Banks Collings was named County Agricultural Agent. Mr. O. H. Anderson was named county agricultural agent in 1929 and lead the agriculture programs in Mercer County until 1933. Individuals following Mr. Collings include Carl S. Bittner and M. R. Dunn for short terms in 1934, A.W. Marion who served 1937 until 1948 with a short break during World War II. During this time the position was filled by Ralph S. Harrod and R. B. Kline. Following the Second World War, Donald E. Zehr, Alfred J. Baxter, Adrian DeBrosse, Marion E. (Nick) Freeman, and Harvey Stanfield served as Agriculture Agent. Currently agricultural education and teaching in the county is done by Earl J. (Joe) Beiler and Todd Mangen, who also works part-time with the 4-H program. Adrian C. DeBrosse was named the first full-time 4-H agent in 1955. He was followed by Edison Klinger, Marion E. (Nick) Freeman, Tom Schlenker, Gary Flinn, and Lori Wunderlich. The current 4-H agent, Barbara Parker-Phares started directing the 4-H program in 1985. She was assisted by Norma (skeet) Wolters who served as 4-H Program Assistant for 25 years. Following her retirement in 2000, Cheryl McKirnan has been the 4-H Program Assistant.

The first full time home agent, Lucille Eby, was hired in 1929 to work with women's home projects and girls 4-H clubs. The end of 1931 brought an end to available funding to continue a home agent position. This position was not reinstated until 1950 when Helen Garvin was named Home Demonstration Agent. Others who followed include Nellie Neff, Marna Baker, Sharon Hoelscher Day, and Ruth Anne Foote, the current Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences. Traditionally, the Mercer County 4-H Agent has coordinated the Junior Fair program, which includes 4-H, Future Farmers of America and Girl Scouts, at the county fair. This includes serving as advisor for the Junior Fairboard which meets throughout the year; preparing the Junior Fair Building to house youth, 4-H club, F. F. A. and Girl Scout exhibits; coordinating, overseeing, and directing all Junior Fair activities during Fair week.

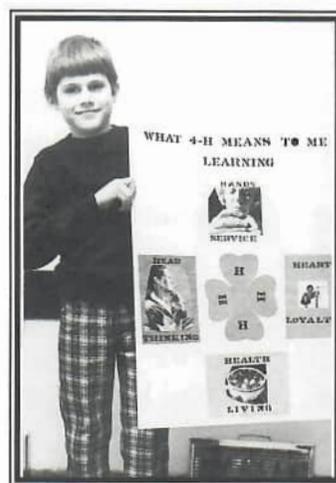
Huelsman Automotive Inc. Sponsor



Barbara Phares, 4-H Agent



Todd Mangen, 4-H Agent



MERCER COUNTY 4-H PROGRAM

The first organized 4-H club in Mercer County occurred in Blackcreek Township in 1920, eighteen years after A. B. Graham initiated the idea of 4-H Clubs. The Chatt Livestock Club was followed by many more clubs forming that year and the next. In 2001, 10 of the 35 organized clubs have been active for 45 or more years. Chatt Chums is the longest standing club, having been participating for 68 years.

Most organized clubs meet year around; different from the summer only format followed by those early groups. Most clubs are comprised of boys and girls taking a variety of projects. There are some specialized clubs for members wishing to concentrate their interests. There are in the areas of horse, dogs, beef, and sheep projects. Four of our clubs boast membership of more than 90 members. The smallest club has 16 members. Nearly 200 adult volunteers serve our 4-H youth as advisors and middle managers of an array of events, camps, activities, and educational efforts. In 2000, 998 children were members of the club program with an additional 138 younger children participating as Cloverbuds.

In addition to a very active traditional club program, Mercer County 4-H has an extensive 4-H in the Classroom presence. In 1975, program assistant, Skeet Wolters, was hired to start new clubs and to provide 4-H curriculum in the classroom. As a result of her efforts, nearly 3200 children are annually taught a series of educational programs throughout the school year. After 25 years of service, Skeet retired November 30, 2000. In 1990, the Mercer County 4-H Foundation was started with a lead gift from Citizens Commercial Bank. The Foundation provides monies for trips and awards for members, volunteer training programs and materials, and educational materials for clubs. Livestock, woodworking, child development, and food and nutrition projects continue to be popular project offerings. In 2000, 4-H members completed nearly 1200 projects for exhibit in the local Junior Fair. [The new Junior Fair Building, was built in 1965.]



Jr. Fair Building



Rockford 4-H photo

Ohio State University
Extension Mercer County Sponsor

County-wide 4-H groups include the Food and Fashion Board, the camp counselor staff, junior fair board and the interstate exchange trip club. Unique programs include conducting two weeks of resident camp at Harbor Point, our locally operated and owned 4-H campgrounds, a once-a-month after school 4-H program, a long standing belief in the educational value of interview judging as every member participates in interviewing in every project he or she takes, and a strong tradition in interstate exchange programs. 2001 marked the 8th exchange, whereby they traveled to South Dakota. (See the year 1944, about Harbor Point Camp Ground being used as a German Prisoner of War Camp, during World War II.)

The 4-H agents which served Mercer County are listed on page 66, with the Ohio State University Extension Office. Adrian DeBrosse started as 4-H agent in 1955, and was made County agent in 1957. He was active in the Fair, especially the Junior Fair, until his death in 1972. The DeBrosse Show Arena was named after him. The current 2002 4-H agent's position is shared by two persons. Barbara Phares, who began in 1985, is now half time, with Todd Mangen. Todd began June 4, 2001, and is 4-H Youth Development half time, and Agriculture and Natural Resources, the other half time. Following the retirement of Norma (Skeet) Wolters in 2000, Cheryl McKirnan has been the 4-H Program Assistant.



Hopewell Grange # 2688 Sponsor

The National Grange Movement

The National Grange movement began shortly after the end of the Civil War to reunite the rural North and South, to organize farmers to overcome their economic plight caused by big business, mainly railroad companies, and to provide a much needed social atmosphere for the entire farm family. The early Grange was very instrumental in the breaking of railroad monopolies, establishing rural mail delivery and the Vocational Ag program, and far too many others to mention on this page. The Grange was well ahead of time by opening membership, including voice and vote, to men and women, 14 years old and up. Also, in each Grange, 4 of their 13 offices had to be held by women, and either men or women were permitted to hold any of the other 9 offices. This policy continues today. The Ohio Grange movement began in the early 1870's. By 1874, nearly 600 Granges had been established in this state. At that time, there were 27 Granges functioning in Mercer County alone. More recently, there were six active Granges in Mercer County: Center, Chattanooga, Hopewell, Montezuma, Union, and Unity. Each of the six Granges put in booth displays in the Agricultural Building, which was destroyed in 1994. Hopewell and United Granges are the only two still active.

Unity Grange

Unity Grange was originally formed in 1873 as Wabash Grange, which met just west of Wabash. In 1917, they reorganized as Unity Grange. In 1958, they purchased the former Washington Twp. High school, south of Wabash on St. Anthony Road, where they meet in 2002. Prior to that, they were located at the old Washington Center Grade School, which was across the road from their present location. They operated their food stand at the Mercer County Fair, for the first time in 1937 and have been serving meals there, every Fair since. Three of their current members worked at that first stand, which was under the Grandstand. Their stand is now located by the Junior Fair Building. The rural oriented Grange currently stands for legislative involvement, family values, improving education and transportation, and it is a source of activities and fellowship for all people of all ages.

Hopewell Grange

Hopewell Grange was organized in 1942. When organized, they met in the Hopewell Township House; therefore, their name, Hopewell Grange. In the late 1940's, they purchased a lunch stand on the Fair Grounds which is now the K of C stand. Sometimes they rented the building out and sometimes they operated a lunch stand. In 1955, they received permission from the Fair Board to build a building on Fair Ground Property and have a 99 year lease with the Mercer County Commissioners. In 1956, the new building was ready and since that time, they have operated a Cafeteria at the Mercer County Fair. For several years, they did operate both lunch stands at the Fair, but eventually sold the one, which now belongs to the K of C.



Gary & Linda Brumbaugh, 1984.
Unity Grange & Tim Hastings.



Unity Grange Food Stand
Mercer County Fair, 2002



Hopewell Grange Building
Mercer County Fair, 2002

Unity Grange # 2116 Sponsor

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**THE MERCER COUNTY FAIR
CELINA, OHIO**

