

Red Willow County Fair
History from 1900's

Researched and written by
Jerda Garey Vickers Ed. D

Edited by Connie Discoe

Red Willow County Fair History

Forward

By Jerda (Thompson) Garey Vickers

County Fair memories are different for everyone. It was on those fair grounds that I remember seeing my dad in a baseball uniform. It was there that I saw my first harness race when my great uncle Frank Thompson was driving. It was on those fair grounds where I got to ride a horse. It was on those fair grounds that I rode the swings with Ben Nelson, who later became Governor of Nebraska. It was on those grounds that I got to show my first 4-H calf, and later watch my children and grandchildren have the same experience with their livestock. It was on those fair grounds that I enjoyed the shows, the rides, the rodeos, visiting with friends, working and judging.

Other memories were made there. LeRoy Leibrandt met his wife Lois at the county fair. They raised their five children south of McCook and involved them in 4-H. He served 43 years on the fair board. Indeed, there are many memories for that family. As the stories and memories evolve, they can be added to this narrative.

My grandfather, Don L. Thompson, served as the general superintendent of the fair in 1930 and was a board member until his death in 1935. My father, Don Thompson, served as the secretary of the fair following long time secretary, Elmer Kay. He began his service in 1935. One of his first assignments was superintendent of the 4-H division of the fair when 4-H became the official name of the girls' and boys' clubs. When my father became involved with the Nebraska State Fair, his brother, Dale Thompson, took his role on the County Fair Board in 1955. Dale later followed his brother's footsteps and was also president of the Nebraska State Fair Board.

It is with pleasure that I can present this short history, and the door is open for more additions and documentation. This history will be a review of historical documents found in the Red Willow County Historical Museum, family resources, and my personal reflections. The 1950's were developed by reading McCook Daily Gazettes. Therefore, this history will be limited in scope, but will provide an overview through the years that the historical documents yield.

Early Years

The Red Willow County fairs began in the late 1800's and were held in Indianola, Nebraska. The Red Willow County Agriculture Society managed the fairs. There was no documentation available at the Red Willow County Historical Society museum concerning the early years.

1902

A letter was sent to the Honorable Board of County Commissioners of Red Willow County by President J.W. Dutcher and Secretary Jernards Hillers. The letter stated: The undersigned President and Secretary of the Red Willow County Agricultural Society do hereby certify that the said society has been duly organized in said county for the improvement of Agriculture in this said county. That twenty of more persons strong, that a constitution and by-laws agreeable to the rules and regulations furnished by the State Board of Agriculture; that the proper and usual officers have been elected and approved, that, that they have raised and paid into the treasury of said society a sum including \$50.00 and that said society had held a fair in said county every year for more than ten years, immediately prior to this date. That this certificate is made in compliance with the statute of this state noting to 'aid' to agricultural societies". This was signed January 14, 1902, and if the fairs had been held 10 years prior, they would have started in 1892.

1903

A protest was filed by Wm. Plourd to the County Commissions on January 6, 1903. He protested that the Red Willow County Agricultural Society should not receive any money from the county Commissioners for the following reasons:

1. The society had not raised and paid into the treasury, by voluntary subscription or fees imposed upon its members the sum of \$50.00 as required by Sec.23, Ch.2, Art.1, 1901 Statutes of Nebraska
2. No list of awards or abstract of the Treasurer's account has been published as required by law
3. The president of the Society has not filed with the County Clerk the certificate as required by law
4. Said Society is not conducted for the purposes for which the name was organized, and it does not encourage the improvement of Agriculture in said county

5. At the last annual meeting the vote at such meeting was not confined to members of the society as provided by the constitution and by-laws, but all present were voted.

On June 8, 1903, a letter was received by the Commissioners, signed by 18 members of the Agricultural Society. The letter stated: "Sirs, we the undersigned residents of Red Willow Co. who were present at the annual election of officers of the Red Willow County Agricultural Society, held at Indianola, Nebr., the first Saturday in December of last year, do wish to make the following statement regarding that election, and the protest filed by certain irresponsible parties, against your allowing the monies allowed by law, to aide and assist in holding a Co. Fair this year as in the past twenty years. (This statement would indicate that County Fairs were held in Indianola in 1882-1902).

We hereby certify first that the aforementioned election was in every respect legal and regular, that there were 121 votes cast, that of that number the officers declared elected received from 85 to 37, none less than 35; that the motion to suspend the rules and allow all residents of the county who were present to vote was made by a member holding a membership ticket, and was seconded by a member holding a membership ticket, and that the president declared the motion carried after a standing vote.

We also declare that the man who had filed the protest, and declare that the election was illegal, was himself a candidate, and solicited votes for himself, thereby declaring his belief that the election was legal provided that HE was elected, failing in that he now declares the election illegal.

We furthermore state that after the mode of procedure, and of balloting was decided upon by the members present, and by the officers of the society, that he (your remonstrator) addressed the voters present as follows: 'I am a candidate for election as Secretary of this fair, and if elected, will do all in my power to advance the interest of the society, if not elected, I will do the other thing'.

We state further state that the society has raised and paid into the treasury the sum of \$100.00 as required by law, that the president of the society has filed with the clerk a certificate as required by law, that a list of the awards, and an abstract of the Treasurers report has been published by the Secretary as e by law; and that the society is for the purposes for which it was organized and that the build of the premiums offered are for the encouragement. We, therefore, in view of the facts set forth, do most respectfully petition and ask that the monies allowed by law to be appropriated and now granted to this society."

1904

On August 31, 1904, the county filed this record concerning the fair. A letter was sent to the County Commissioners that stated: "Whereas, it has been reported that the Red Willow County Agricultural Society has abandoned its intention of holding its annual fair at the fair ground heretofore used, and have decided to hold the same within the city limits of the City of Indianola, in the nature of a street fair;

AND Whereas, the undersigned believe it would be unjust to citizens of other parts of the county to hold the county fair within the city limits of the City of Indianola, and to draw money for that purpose from the County Treasury of the county;

Therefore, we hereby request that you instruct the clerk and treasurer of said county not to deliver the warrant for the money allowed at your last meeting nor to pay the same until a hearing may be had before the Board of County Commissioners at your next meeting, which we understand will be September First." It was signed by H.H. Berry, W.R. Humny, H.H. Forstch, J.E. Kelley, and C. W. Dow. (These names were difficult to read as they were written in pencil and may not be spelled correctly). There is no record of the hearing in these files.

1905

The squabble continues and a remonstrance was filed in May of 1906. (Although the handwriting says 1906, this more likely was filed in 1905). This remonstrance was signed by 85 persons. This protest stated: We the undersigned residents of Red Willow County protest against the Board of County Commissioner in making any appropriation for the year of 1905, for the following reasons:

1. That the Red Willow County Agricultural Society is not and has not been, for several years, run according to the laws governing Agricultural Societies in the state of Nebraska.
2. That the said Society has not paid into the treasury, by voluntary subscription of fees imposed upon its members the sum of fifty dollars as required by law.
3. That the officers elected at the December meeting were not elected legally according to the by-laws of that Society.
4. That the president of said Society has not filed with the County Clerk the Certificate as required by law.
5. That no lists of awards or abstracts of the treasurer's account has been published as required by law.

6. That aid Society is not conducted for the purposes for which the same was organized and does not encourage the improvement of Agriculture in said county.
7. That it is a waste of the county funds to appropriate money for a society that is run for the benefit of a few individuals and not for the benefit of all residents of the County.”

An addition to this protest stated: “The officers of the Red Willow County Agricultural Society are circulating a report that the present officers are all new officers, but the following named persons are old officers of the society: A .P .Day, John Dutcher, Chris Jensen, E.A. Sexson, and W.S. Fitch.”

An assumption that the pressure was on to remove the agriculture society and they responded with three major letters.

The First was a petition signed by 119 Indianola merchants and professionals. There were no signers who listed their profession as farmers, but the last list did not list their professions. This petition stated, “ We your petitioners, tax-payers of Red Willow County, whose names appear below, do most respectfully ask that you grant to the provided for by statute for the purpose of aiding and assisting in hold a county fair at Indianola, Nebr. This fall.”

On August 8, a letter was sent to the County Commissioner stating, “We, the duly elected officers of the Red Willow County Agricultural Society, do hereby certify that we have adopted a constitution and by-laws agreeable to the rules set forth by the State Board of Agriculture, that we have elected officers, that we have raised and paid into the treasury a sum equal to Fifty Dollars and more, that we held a Fair of three days during the years just past, and we do hereby most respectfully ask your honorable boy to appropriate to our aid the sum of money arranged for by the statute.” It was signed by E.A. Sexson, J. W. Dutcher, Sr., and C. W. Dow.

This letter was written August 12, 1905, and sent to E. J. Wilcox from Sun City, Iowa. He was responding to a notice he had received concerning the Society and their request for funds.

He stated: “I and Will are both here with our running horses attending the races here, and it is almost impossible for us to be there August 18. It is the Commissioners duty to make the Agricultural Society show that they have run it as a county fair, and also run it according to the County Fair laws of the State of Nebraska, which it is impossible for them to do. Also, it is no new organization, merely a lot of the same old officers that have been running it for several years. How can the Commissioners expect them to do any better than they have been doing? Why did they not make an application long before for the County funds and not wait until so late as this. The Commissioners should know that it is too late in the day to commence to get up a good county fair for

next month. All they want is to get this County funds so to pay the officers' salaries." This letter was signed by Wallace Plourd.

The commissioners did receive a response on August 17 to certify specific information required by law. W.A. McCool reported that he had published a report of the 1904 fair in the Indianola Independent newspaper that identified a list of the premium winners and that they paid \$1.00 for a report that was published three times. He also reported that it listed receipts and expenditures and was itemized in full.

(It can be speculated that there was a movement afoot to change the location and organization of the fair. There was also a continuing fight to keep the commissioners from funding the 1905 fair.)

1906

The law was being followed and the Commissions received a letter July 2, 1906 requesting funds for the for the annual fair at Indianola in 1906. They stated they had raised and paid into the treasury, a sum equal to \$50.00, had adopted a constitution and by-laws, and held a fair last year of four days duration. They published the report of the President and Secretary and complied with the law. It was signed by J.W. Dutcher, President, and James E. Ryan, Secretary.

1907

Red Willow County was well represented with a county exhibit at the state fair each year. A 1907 score sheet showed the exhibit had 194 varieties of products. They were scored on good medium and poor and taste in display. They scored a 60 percent on varieties and ended up with a total score of 854. The premium award back to the county was \$147.41 for that year. In 1915 the exhibit earned \$106.30. These funds were deposited in the receipts for the year. Carol Fitch used to tell a story about preparing an exhibit. Since hedge apples were abundant on his farm, he came up with the idea of exhibiting the apples after they had been colored red with lipstick. He said no one could figure out the variety. I just remember him telling the story at a neighborhood picnic at his croquet court on the farm. The state fair no longer has the county exhibits.

1908-1909

No records were found concerning these years and no other resources were investigated.

1910

The fairs continued as did the horse racing. The Southwestern Nebraska Fair Circuit included McCook, Benkelman, Imperial, and Trenton, but the races were not held with the Red Willow County Fair, unlike the Imperial and Benkelman races. John Hubert, historian of the Red Willow County Historical Society, recalls conversations with railroaders who said there had been a racetrack where the current Valmont Industries is located, and they said a train ran from the station to the track several times a day for spectators. It is speculated that it also ran from Indianola and Culbertson, but we have no documentation for that statement.

1911-1914

There were no records available concerning these years and no investigation of newspapers was conducted.

1915

Total receipts of the fair were \$2,144.09 and disbursements were \$2,115.39. The expenses on the county exhibit totaled more than the premium awarded. One of the expenses was \$6.00 for basketball. At the end of the year there was a total of \$28.70 in the bank.

1916

A request from C.S. Thompson, President of the Red Willow "County Fair Association," (no longer listed at Agricultural Society) was made to secure funds for the 1916 county fair in June, 1916. However, there was evidence submitted and depositions taken, that there was gambling allowed to be carried on during the Fair upon the grounds that were under the control of the Association and the Commissioners disallowed the funding.

Those interviewed in the deposition were: W.A. Fitch, Ben Canagy, J.W. Dutcher, Andy Barber, and Jim Ryan, Mr. Sommerville presented the questions and asked each person when they attended the fair, if they saw gambling devices, and if anyone tried to stop the gambling. There were mixed answers but the last person, Andy Barber, testified that he had witnessed the gambling.

Chris Jensen stated that on October 6 and 7, 1915, there was open gambling for money, and various devices for gambling on the fairgrounds, and stated gambling was open and notorious with the knowledge of the officials of the Red Willow County Fair Association. J.W. Dutcher also had a written testimony that stated the same as Chris Jensen.

Mr. Plourd said, "He was in charge of concessions and there were no gambling concessions." The County Commissioners moved by Moore and seconded by Stewart, that the Board finds from evidence submitted that there was gambling allowed to be carried on during the Fair upon the grounds that were under the control of the association last year, and that pursuant to law in such cases the allowance be disallowed. The motion carried. At the next meeting on June 27, 1916, Commissioner Moore moved that the motion of Commissioner Stewart be amended as to read as follows: "Moved that the application of Red Willow County Agricultural Society now before the Board for an appropriation for the ensuing year, be not further considered, for the reason that the same question has been heretofore considered, determined and adjudicated by this Board."

However, in July, C.S. Thompson presented a certificate to Charles K. Dutcher, County Clerk stating that members had made a voluntary subscription of \$56.69 within the year 1916 and had that sum in the treasury. They were making an application to the County Commissions to order a warrant for \$754.00 to aid the Society in holding a fair in October 1916. This request was made after the Commissioners voted to not fund the fair because of the gambling.

There is no record of a fair in 1916 from the resources reviewed.

1917

An application for funds was made in 1917 and the statement said that the Red Willow County Agricultural Society has in every year since its organization held an annual fair of at least three days. This would imply there was a fair in 1916. The request was for eight cents per capita. This request was made in March of 1917.

On August 6, 1917 another application was made to order a warrant for the county in the amount of five cents on each inhabitant of the county upon a basis of the last vote for the member of Congress in Red Willow County, allowing five inhabitants for each

vote. This amount was \$595.00. This Certificate also stated that a three days fair was held by the society in the year 1916.

1918

There was movement to reestablish a county fair under a new law and to have a vote of the residents of Red Willow County. The petition presented to the County Commissioners had most signers from McCook. However, Indianola was well represented on the petitions, including the president of the Agriculture Society who signed the petition twice.

The petition stated: “ We, the undersigned, qualified voters of Red Willow County, Nebraska, do hereby petition asking that the question of the acceptance by Red Willow County, Nebraska, of the provisions of the act entitled, ‘ An act to authorize counties in the State of Nebraska to establish and maintain a county fair, to purchase, hold and improve real estate for that purpose, to convey the same, and to levy and collect taxes for such purposes’.” The petition requested that a vote be taken at the general election on November 5, 1918, and if a majority of the votes cast upon the question be for such proposition that a county fair be established as provided by said act.

1919

At the January 2, 1919, County Commissioner’s meeting, Commissioner Moore moved, and it was seconded by Mr. Meyers, that the Commissioners proceed to investigate and consider locations for a county fair as provided for in Chapter 168, Section 1 to 12 of the 1917 Session Laws, and voted and carried at the recent election of this county and to be able to report as to our findings and place of locating and establishing a permanent fairground for this county as some future meeting. The investigation began and land was secured.

The Twenties and Thirties

1920

By-Laws of the Red Willow County Fair Board were adopted on June 30, 1920, by Board members present including: S.H. Stilgebouer, President, Chas. W. Kelley, Vice President, Clarke Hedges, Treasurer, Elmer Kay, Secretary, and directors, M.E. Graham, John F. Cordeal, J.F. Carmichael, L. E. Moore, and Homer Bastian. The By-Laws did not list the number of members of the board or who appointed the members.

Other interesting components stated that the official term for the elective officers would commence with the notification of appointment and continue until revoked by the County Fair Board. The annual meeting was to be held the second Saturday of January and special meetings would be by call of president. A regular meeting of the Board was to be held on the last day of the Fair.

Elected officers were President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. An executive committee was appointed by the President, composed of three persons, including the secretary. That committee had the power to appoint and remove at pleasure all officers not elected by the Board. (Assume the secretary and treasurer) This committee has the power to make rules, contracts, and to call the superintendents of classes in as advisors in preparing for the Board recommendations for the revision of the premium list, but could not change the premium list when adopted nor exceed its appropriations made by the Board.

Superintendents and aids were to be appointed by the Board and class superintendents will have direction of all articles in their respective departments, see that all animals have suitable stalls and pens and that articles are conveniently arranged for examination by the judges. Superintendents and assistants may be sworn in and clothed with police powers to be exercised should necessity demand. They are required to file a detailed statement of their work at the close of each fair with recommendations for improvement and betterment of their departments.

There were specific rules for the selection of Judges by the fair board and they could not compete in any class they supervised or own any animals exhibited in a class. The Superintendents had the power to remove an exhibit entered in the wrong class by the Secretary had the authority to transfer it to the proper class if was erroneously entered.

In case of a dispute as to the age of an animal exhibited, the animal's owner shall also be required to file an affidavit proving age of animal. In a case where three judges are selecting a winner, two judges must agree. Judges must sign entry books.

This summary of the first By-Laws provides a guideline for actions to be made with the County Fair.

Purchase of land for the fairgrounds was made May 5, 1920 for \$10,000. Milo B Harbaugh and W.W. Somerville later signed the agreement which allowed the crops to be harvested, when ready, but they also waived their rights to damages from the Red Willow County and the Fair Board for any damages that may have occurred during the development of the grounds. Twenty citizens from McCook signed a note to The First National Bank of McCook with an interest rate of 10 percent for \$5,000.00. Some of the signers were: Harold P. Sutton, Rex E Scott, A. Galusha, L. Suess, R.R. Reed, W.D. Mills, D.W. Colson, and H.D. Strunk. Other names were not distinguishable. Actual documents are now accessible in the Great Plains Historical Society Museum.

Contractors were sought to begin building the fairgrounds. George P. Reintjes from Kansas City agreed to furnish all labor and equipment, to do the carpenter work on a 24 x48 building at the fairground site for the sum of \$310.00 with work to begin not later than September 22, 1920. Mr. Reintjes also contracted to build a cow barn for \$630.00 and a horse barn for the same amount. The Schaefer Tent and Awning Company provided the tents for the first fair.

The fair was held that fall on October 5-8. A report made by Clarke Hedges included attendance of each day, number of adult tickets, children tickets and season tickets sold. Tickets were \$.25 for children, \$.50 adults, and \$1.50 for season. The largest number of paid tickets was on Thursday and 3,175 people attended. Total tickets issued for four days was 9,019 and paid admissions were 7,369 for a total deposit of \$3,691.00. The fair was deemed successful.

One hundred and thirty-five exhibitors competed in agriculture and home economics departments. The smallest award was twenty-five cents and G. Wilcox had many winning entries and received \$17.00. Other major exhibitors were W.C. Randel, Mrs. John J. Jones, W.E. Baldwin, A.C. Pew, Mrs. Floyd Erwin, and Mrs. Paul Smith. The McCook Elementary School received \$12.00 for their school exhibits.

Premiums for cattle were even higher. C. Ritchie was awarded \$60.00 for his cattle and J.F. Carmichael received a five-dollar special award for the Best Cattle exhibited. There were also poultry, goats and pet stock exhibits. The best loaf of bread exhibited by Mrs. W. J. Walker won a 50-pound sack of Flour. Best Farm Products was won by Gerald Wilcox and he received \$15.00 and he also won Best exhibit of Grain and received the "Best Hat in the Store", given by Lineburg & Gaarde.

Prior to the County Fair a southwest Nebraska District Fair was held at Maywood, Nebraska in September. Swine were shown at this fair and R.E. Walkington had the Senior Champion Boar, Champion Sow, and Aged Herd. Others exhibiting from the county were L.E. Moore, M.A. Wasson, J.F. Cordeal, Elmo Mayo, Elsie Butherus, Bryan

Harrison, S. W. Clarke and Son, N.A. Newkirk, Art More, Joshua Rowland, Ed Davis and Son, J.W. Riddle and Son, and Emily Disler. In the garden produce G. Wilcox was the winner of the best and largest display and was awarded \$17.50.

According to the county fair premium book in 1920, eligible entries in beef cattle included Shorthorn, Aberdeen Angus, Gallaway, Red Polled and Polled Durham. There were no Hereford cattle entries allowed, although Anxiety 4th Hereford cattle were advertised in the premium book. In the swine department entries were listed for Poland China, Berkshire, Chester White, Duroc Jersey, and Hampshire breeds.

Mangelwurzel was an allowable garden entry along with sugar beets. Twenty-four varieties of apples were listed, along with seven varieties of crab apples. Exhibitors could replace any over ripe vegetables or fruit during the fair to keep their exhibit fresh. Butter, cottage cheese, and American cheese were accepted entries, along with soap. Other listings were comparable to those listed in current fairs.

Entertainment included the European Comique, The Two Detenens who were tumblers, and Luca and Inez, weightlifters. There was no other information available about the other entertainment offered.

The budget estimate presented to the County Commissioners for the 1921 year totaled \$20,000. Projects listed were: Hog sheds and pens, Cattle barn, draft horse and mule barn, show ring and judging pavilion, women's building, an addition to the women's building to be used for agricultural exhibits, addition to grandstand, completion of grading of race track and fences, office building, trees, water service improvement, bleachers and additional seating, and a house for custodian of grounds. It appeared that the economy was good and great plans were being made for future fairs.

1921

Attendance was down from the 1920, event held September 13 through September 16. There were 5,206 paid admissions with only 280 children attending. Charges were made for the grandstand show and for parking.

No records were found about exhibitors, but there were charges for lumber which indicated buildings were being constructed and there were checks written to the Farmers and Merchants Bank for the buildings. Payments were made toward the loan.

Fair activities included the famous McCook band under direction of Col. H.P. Sutton, and an open-air dance held each night on the 120-foot platform in front of the grandstand with music by the Blue Melody Boys orchestra. Performances each

afternoon and evening included the De Peran Tria, world famous athletes, The Four Salores trapeze artists and Frank DeRue comedy aerial and ground contortionist.

A statement in the fair premium book said that free attractions are no ordinary county fair attractions. All are booked for the Nebraska State Fair the week preceding the Red Willow County Fair and for the Kansas State Fair the week following the County Fair.

A miniature railway was in action. It was made in McCook and was an exact duplicate of the large type C. B. & Q passenger engines. Rails were nine and three-fourths inches apart. Rides were given and a big free show every night in front of the grandstand.

Boys and Girls Pig Clubs were formally organized by county agent, H.H.Clemons, and members received season tickets with free bedding. Pigs shown in this class could also be entered and shown in open classes. This would have been the start of the 4-H program in the county.

A request was made to the County Commissioners for the 1922 fair in the amount \$11,000 to cover payments on real estate, repairs on buildings, setting out trees and caring for the trees and building a small building for the poultry exhibit.

Horse racing association dues were paid and there was a check for the war tax to the Department of Revenue on grandstand entertainment.

1922

The fair was held October 3 ,4, 5, and 6. Charges for attendance included a season ticket for \$2.00, general admission \$.50 for adults and \$.25 for children. Children under eight were free. To reserve an auto space on the racecourse was \$1.00, cost to sit on bleachers \$.25, and admission to night fair was also \$.25.

Acts at the fair included Zat Zam, a knife thrower, Three Marvelous Kirks and the Crane Family. There were harness races, running races, chariot races, a hippodrome race and auto and motorcycle races. The midway included a merry-go-round, miniature railway, giant ferris wheel, and mammoth sea plane swing. The Anderson-Srader Shows and 10 cars of interesting equipment were there.

A basketball tournament included the following teams and games: Danbury vs. Bartley, Indianola vs. Danbury, Red Willow vs. Lebanon, and Lebanon vs. Bartley. A football game was listed at four o'clock with McCook High School vs. Orleans High School. Radio was installed to use for announcing from the judge's stand, for starting races, etc. The horse racing circuit included Imperial, Culbertson, Benkelman, Maywood, and McCook.

Elmer Kay was paid \$400.00 for serving as secretary of the fair for year 1922 and was elected to the board, along with C.L. Bodewell. Labor for building 12 new horse stalls was \$27.00 to C. P. Eldred.

Winners of the Baby contest included: six months to twelve months: first place, Walter V. Campbell and second was Maurice S. Closs. They received ten and five dollars. In the 13 to 18- month division, Thelma Clark was first and three tied for second: Roland Klein, Marcella D. H. Harris and Argle Fern Jimmerson. Winners in the 18 to 24-month division were June Lucille Pratt and Donald Chas. Garlick. Marjorie Mae and Mazine Marie Lofton.

Top exhibitors of beef cattle were Thompson Brothers of Indianola and they received a check for \$85.00. C. D. Fritchie of McCook had the best Dairy Cattle exhibit and received \$163.00. Moore Brothers of Bartley had the best Swine exhibit. A group of boys and girls from Danbury had a pig club. Members were Alan Green, Frank Graham, Vern Green, Murry Graham, Hancie Wyckoff, Mable Wyckoff, Vernon Puelz, Burdette Lord Vivian Lord and Stanley Miller. Charles Wiggins of Lebanon, Nebraska had the best exhibit of goats.

Best collection of field products was won by R.S. McDonald of McCook and John Burtless was second. M. Clark had the best collection of fruits. Other special awards were for canning to Mrs. F. R. Klocke and Mrs. W.R. Amen. The baking prizes were awarded to Mrs. Chas. Benjamin, Mrs. Carl Hanneman, Mrs. J.F. Root, Mrs. E. Barrett, Helen Esch and Mrs. M. E. Gram. Mrs. E. W. Parmenter received \$5.00 for a hand painted vase. The millinery exhibit special award premium was divided by Mrs. John Burtless, Mrs. C.F. Evand, Mrs. Otto J. Randel and Mrs. William Meyers.

The estimate of funds needed for 1923, presented to the County Commissioners included: rebuilding race track on each turn, building for poultry and pet stock exhibits, two out houses, two hog houses, one sheep and goat shed and painting all buildings, plus indebtedness and notes signed by merchants for a total of \$7,650.00

1923

The county fair was held October 2, 3, 4, and 5th. It is speculated that horse racing was held during the fair, as the fair board spent money for cleaning stalls, and labor at the horse track. There was also money for a starter license from the American Trotting Association.

A contract was made with the Arapahoe Band for music during the four days of the fair in the amount of \$500.00. Names of band officers included E.L. Bellamy, R.F. Emmet, Ralph E. John and Harry Crowell.

Another bill was for tent and supplies from the Ridpath Horner Chautauqua Company. A diagram showed where to put stakes for the 60 x 96-foot tent.

A contract for a merry-go-round and ferris wheel was made with H.C. Harineger of Boulder, Colorado for 15 percent of gross receipts from ticket sales. Enclosed in the file was a resolution from the Red Willow County Ladies Club that stated; "Be it resolved that our County Fair Board communicate with the new Dictator, Mr. Thos. J. Johnson, 15 No. Clark St., Chicago and endeavor to secure ONLY clean carnival concessions at our next county Fair." The letter was signed by Mrs. Robert J. Allen, Mrs. W.H. Meyers and Mrs. L. E. Longnecker. This resolution was to ensure the fair board would be diligent in inspecting the concessions at the fair, and there would not be an incident like the one in Indianola prior to moving the fair.

One of the events of the fair was a Baby Show. Dr. Elizabeth Mason-Hohl presented a list of expenses for the conference supplies for \$6.60. There were winners in three divisions of 6-12 months, 12 to 18 months and 18 to 24 months. Three placings were given in each division. Winners included: Catherine Bernice Sullivan, Marjorie DeGroff, Doris June Hegenberger, Glen Arden Viersen, Viola Dudot, Warren Clifton Smith, Clayton Harmon, Charles Dean Kilburn and Mildred and Margaret Weaver.

A payment was made for \$200.00 for a dog and pony show. Several payments were made on notes to the First National Bank at eight percent interest.

A school building was purchased from District 17 for \$1,000.00 and the cost for moving was \$30.00. George Harris did carpenter work on the building from October 10 to 15 for a cost of \$32.40. Labor for fixing the fence after moving the building cost \$16.00 at forty cents an hour. The building was known as the "bungalow" and was located on the old high school property. According to the McCook Public School minutes, researched by McCook Daily Gazette writer Dick Hellner, and published June 13, 1974, "The school board met in special session at Lineburg and Gaarde's store for purpose of receiving bids and selling to the highest bidder the school building known as the Bungalow. The Red Willow County Fair Board submitted the highest bid of \$1000.00". He went on to state that the building was moved the week of August 2, 1923. However, a later Gazette article, August 20, 1923, stated, "The moving of the old bungalow from Central School grounds to the County fairgrounds is a slow task. The building has been moved to N street this morning. However, it will make a splendid addition to the fair buildings when located." A later article, during the fair on October 4, 1923, stated that, "The large frame building has been divided into four rooms which gives various departments individuality and better opportunity to display." According to old timers, as reported by Mr. Hellner, "In early days, dances sponsored by various groups, were held in the building."

The only listing available on exhibits was for the goat and poultry show, including pigeons, and the judge did not award any placings on the leghorn chickens. Some of the

exhibitors were Fred Wiggins, W.J. Shultz, H.E. Sawyer, Mrs. M. Esch, Leo Jeffries, Carol Cappel, John Amann, Neal Albrecht, H.O. Thomas, Mrs. Cashen, B.J. Crocker, Leonard Bell, Republican Valley Hatchery, Ruby Brurmgardt, Harold Kene, M.R. Meadows, C. Bunstock, C. Bales, Hugh Scot, Mrs. Minnie Shaw, Thomas Coleman, Frank Wassen, Francis Ahrens, Harry Trupp, and Alfred Ahrens.

1924

Horse racing was the word for the 1924 County Fair. The county fair was a member of the Nebraska-Colorado Fair Circuit. This circuit started at the Imperial, Chase County Fair in August 20-23. It was then followed: Perkins County, Grant; Philips County, Holyoke, Colorado; Logan County, Sterling; Yuma County, Yuma; Dundy County, Benkelman, and Red Willow County, McCook. The Red Willow County Fair was held September 30-October 3.

New to the fair was auto racing on October 3, after the horse racing. There were no entry fees and the classes were: the "A", a five-mile race with a purse of \$100.00, \$40.00, and \$20.00, Class "B"- a five-mile race with purses of \$80.00, \$20.00, and \$10.00, and the top three in each race did a "sweepstakes" ten-mile race, for top prizes of \$175.00, \$60.00, and \$40.00. Finally, a three-mile "Consolation" race was open to all non-money winners for a top prize of \$30.00 for first; \$15.00 for second; and \$10.00 for third place.

Correspondence from the Nebraska Fair Managers Association requested five dollars in dues and a list of officers and fair dates. Their letterhead listed all their members which also included the Bartley Stock Show. The fair was also listed in the Huff's National Fair Directory that cost one dollar for the listing. J.R. Jolly was named to the board for a two-year term.

1925

The only communication found for 1925 were letters of acceptance for appointment to the County Fair Board for a three-year term from M.E. Graham from Danbury, and from S.H. Stilgebouer from Marion. Mr. J.V. Harrison was also named as a board member, serving until 1941.

1926

It is assumed the fair continued to grow and the same format was utilized. However, the only resource found was a letter from the Cooperative Extension Service about the summary of the horse and mule pulling contests held throughout the state. The letter stated that 225 teams had participated in the contest during the fair season and the overall winner was from Wayne County that pulled 2900 hundred pounds the length of the pull was 27 ½ feet.

Red Willow county had five teams in class I and two in class II. George Abbott accepted a board appointment and he served until 1946. No information was found in the archives of the fair board in the museum

1927

The Red Willow County Fair Board leased a tract of land to the city of McCook for their standpipe on the west side of McCook for 99 years. The lease directed the city to plant and care for a row of trees and to plant grass around the standpipe and designate the area as a city park. A signed document from Mayor John Kelley stated that the City Of McCook in accepting the attached lease makes the further agreement to prepare the ground and plant trees upon the leased tract in the spring of 1928, and to be cared for thereafter in accord with the agreements contained in said lease including the renewal and replacement of dead trees, under the general direction of the Park Board or Park Commissioners of said City. It was dated May 20, 1927.

(This park area now is the Senior Center Area and parking lot. However, the trees that border the area are remaining.)

The Fair Managers Association requested specific information from the fair board re: ticket prices, county support, officers, total receipts, equipment expenditures, improvements and dates of next year's fair.

The Special Midway attractions included four big rides and ten big shows contracted with the J.L. Landes Shows. The fair was held a full week from August 22 to 27 in 1927. Shows listed included: "Colored Jubilee Minstrels, Schnitz Seymour's Midnight Follies, Musical Comedy Deluxe featuring the Famous Lyric Quartet. Two Dancing Marvels, Bessie Hale, and Famous Winter Garden Chorus".

The ticket found in the file stated that the second day cost was 50 cents, but at the bottom left there was \$22.00 listed. Speculation is that the amount would have been for parking and for all events and rides, or that with each ticket sold that was a running tally of income.

Otto Randel was the superintendent of an exhibit called "Precinct Collective Agriculture Exhibit." Perry precinct won the contest. The exhibit included corn dent, corn, wheat, oats, barley and rye, other varieties of grain, seed and forage crops, grain in the sheaf, native grasses, tame grasses, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, cabbage, squash, melons, pumpkins, root crops, stalk display, miscellaneous field and garden crops. The exhibit was scored on quality and number of exhibits, taste in the display and artistic display. Wilcox again was the big winner. It is noted that cream pies were exhibited. (Food spoilage did not seem to be an item of concern; however, exhibitors of vegetables and fruits could remove spoiled items and replace with fresher items.) There were 356 exhibitors and many of those names are being repeated in current generations of exhibitors. New board members included O.B. Smiley, Don Thompson Sr. and W.H. Malleck.

1928

The city of McCook accepted the lease. They also agreed to prepare the ground and plant trees on the tract in the spring of 1928.

Specific information concerning the previous year's fair was requested by the Fair Managers Association. The requested information included ticket prices, county support, officers, total receipts, equipment expenditures, improvements and dates of fair. A blank form was found in the files, so there was no proof that the requested information was provided. C.O. Newberry accepted a two-year term on the board.

Fair exhibitor entries numbered 293. Poultry appeared to be a popular potential exhibit as the entry book listed over 500 specific class opportunities. Rabbits and pigeons also listed 50 classes each. Ribbon awards and premiums were only made to the first and second placings in the open classes.

Boys and Girls Club member entries were placed and recorded for the complete class. There were seven steers, and 13 swine entries.

The girls club clothing classes included opportunity to exhibit bloomers, corselets and teddies. There was a class for bungalow dresses and one for a wash dress. The only food classes were for cheese biscuits, pie, white bread and cake. The club secretary book was also exhibited, a class that lasted for many years. There were no school exhibits recorded in 1928, but there were five women's club booths. The clothing, foods and fine arts were identified as domestic arts.

The fair was in good financial condition and only two notes, one for \$1700.00 and one for \$800.00. Total receipts for the 1928 fair were \$8963.53. Other income from rentals to the McCook High School, American Legion for dance hall, Fireman's Carnival,

McCook Ball Club and City of McCook, Airport were \$645.10. Total expenditures were \$9901.28. The airstrip was on the south side of the grandstand.

1929

In a report to the County Commissioners the fair board on August 6, reported that they had completed a new roof on the grandstand with hot asphalt and gravel. Six new 6x6 timbers, 28 feet long were placed through the middle of the stand and almost the entire grandstand was repainted. There is a new judge's stand, press box, etc., built on top of stand.

The Domestic Arts building had the entire roof re-coated with hot asphalt and repairs were made to interior, doors and windows. The entire agriculture building, 24x48, was repainted with two coats of paint, along with the poultry building, 33x50. The entire cattle building, 26x100, was repainted and the office, 14x20, was also repainted.

Other work included repainting the racehorse barn, 26x100, and repairing the interior. The racehorse stable had a new roof due to wind loss which was covered by insurance. Hog houses also had roofs nailed and the men's and ladies' restrooms were repainted. Also painted were fences and new woven wire was placed on the north side of track. The entire bug rail on inside of track was also repainted, as well as, all fences on outside of home stretch. Graveling was done on main street, main north and south street; and all wires and fixtures on light poles were repaired. A new sign was purchased for the front entrance, measuring 2 feet x 26 feet.

Barnes-Carruthers Association was the contractors for the 1929 fair. The Geddis Trio was a horizontal bar acrobatic group and they utilized humor in their act. As an added feature the young lady in the company appears a second time in a fast and graceful "Spanish web" and loop-the-loop number. The other act was the Four Vivians. Two men and two "pretty" girls make up the quartette of gymnasts and comedians. These acts would be the free entertainment at the fair.

Another act contracted was the Dramatic Tent Show with the Chick Boyes Players. The fair was scheduled for August 19-August 24th. The contract required the county to have all their free entertainment over by nine o'clock each night and to place all rides such as merry-go-round and other noise making device far enough away from the tent so there would be no interference. The county would receive 15 percent of receipts and the Chick Boyes Players would retain the remainder. The agent of the group would be in McCook at least 10 days in advance of the opening date to do the advance billing of the show. The manager of the group was from Hebron, Nebraska. Their letter stated that it was not a Broadway show or a Broadway cast but a snappy repertoire company that

makes an honest effort to give the public its money's worth. Horse races and auto races were also on the fair entertainment list.

Admissions were still collected from the main gate, grandstand, and night entertainment for a total of \$4012.97. Total receipts from fair were \$7795.76. Other income to the fair board included a hog sale, McCook Ball Club, City of McCook airport, American Legion for car races and high school rent. New board members were Ed Davis Jr. and L.T. Parker.

1930

An agreement was made on March 19, 1930, with McCook Baseball Club for rental of the baseball ground, grandstand, bleachers, refreshment booth and auto parking space for exclusive purpose of baseball games and practice in the afternoons. The contract mentioned that racehorses trained at the fair grounds and horsemen are entitled to the use of the racetrack, without interference until 11:00 A. M. each day. The club also paid for water used and police service provided during the ball games. The baseball club could use the refreshment stand and receive all income. Contract amount was \$350.00.

The fair had advanced to producing an annual premium list and review of the upcoming fair. The book found stated it was the 11th annual premium list. It could be assumed that the fair board had been producing an annual printed list. This book had the postage paid and could be mailed.

The greeting listed the dates August 19-22. The Ted North Players performed on Monday night in their own water-proof tent with new, comfortable, cushioned chairs. Ladies were free on Monday night with each paid adult ticket. The opening play was "Self Defense".

Tuesday was dedicated to school children and all children of school age accompanied by an adult were admitted free. Music was furnished by the twice State Champion High School Band of McCook, under direction of Prof. Leo Kelly.

Horse racing was on the agenda and Red Willow County was a member of the State Racing Commission Circuit, in co-operation with Imperial, Albion, Lincoln, Grand Island, Kearney and Wahoo. One Nebraska State League Baseball game was scheduled to be played on the ball grounds between McCook and North Platte. Airplane rides were available on monoplanes and biplanes on the airport south of Grandstand. People were encouraged to take a ride on the GAZETTE'S 'Newsboy,' the plane used for making newspaper deliveries to area towns.

A special pageant depicting the history of southwest Nebraska was scheduled for every evening. The production was staged by the John B. S. Rogers Producing Company of Fostoria, Ohio, under the auspices and for the benefit of the Southwest Nebraska Historical Society and financially guaranteed by the McCook Chamber of Commerce.

More than 400 were in the production. Auto racing was also scheduled and conducted under the direction of the Consolidate Auto Racing Association, headquartering in Denver, Colorado.

Officers of the Fair board were W.H. Malleck, president, Joe V. Harrison, vice-president and John Cordeal, treasurer. The Executive committee members were John. F Cordeal, Don L. Thompson and Elmer Kay. Don Thompson was the General Superintendent.

Autos were admitted at main gates free, and free parking space was provided. It was noted that there was no parking on 5th or O streets.

Boys and Girls Clubs were now listed as 4-H Clubs. Canning, cooking, girls' room, poultry, farm mechanics and farm accounts were projects requiring two years to complete. Clothing, hot lunch and dairy calf are the only clubs requiring three years to complete. Keep well, baby beef, swine,

sheep, rope, potato, corn and garden clubs can be complete in one season's work. Articles exhibited in 4-H club class cannot be entered in the open class, however 4-H members were not barred from entering articles in the open class made in club work, but not entered in the club class.

1931

The "Ted North Players" appeared again at the 1931 fair. The first night opening play was "Jonesy" and included vaudeville, scenery and an orchestra. On the first day of the fair when school children had free admission, the "Ted North Players" presented a special matinee performance of "Huckleberry Finn" in the big tent which had seating for 1,500. The fair dates were August 25-28.

Harness racing was added to the racing schedule for the first three afternoons. The Red Willow County Fair was a member of the Nebraska Short Ship Racing Circuit, in co-operation with Hastings, Aurora, Geneva, Clay Center, Beatrice and Pawnee City. A six-horse team of the Union Stock Yards was shown each day in front of the grandstand.

Other grandstand performers were Getz & Danner, a combination of jumping horses, with lady riders. Tucker's Novelty Ostrich Races also were an attraction. Auto racing completed the entertainment with the Consolidated Auto Racing Association of Denver conducting the races.

The same officers as were listed in 1930 conducted the fair. Superintendents included: Don L. Thompson, H.N. Rosebush, R.O. DeMay, W.C. Bullard, Everett Sliger, Lester A. Walker, John F. Cordeal, P.M. Bell, W. H. Malleck, M.E. Graham, L.E. Moore, M. Cottingham, George A. Scott, Otto J. Randel, R.S. McDonald, Mrs. J.W. Hastry, Mrs. H. I

Nyberg, Mrs. Carl Neubauer, Mrs. Otto Randel, Mrs. A.C. Wiehe, Mrs. I. L.Neff, Mrs. C.D. Ritchie, M.E. Graham, Mrs. Chas. Nelms, Mrs. Roy Wilcox, Forrest J. Scrivner, R.B.Somerville, C.M.Anderson, Rex E. Scott, Wm. Petty, George Traphagan, Mrs. E.M. Nebergall, Dr. M. Campbell and A. Lenhart.

A major purchase for the Red Willow County Fair Board was a public address system. It was billed as the largest sound-proof truck, including a self-contained motor generator power supply. It also had broadcast station type microphones, local and long-distance horns, and capacity for radio and phonograph record reproduction. It claimed to have outdoor coverage up to 25,000 people and was available for rental for any outdoor or indoor use.

Again, the fair contracted with Harwager's Mechanical Rides for the midway for the merry-go-round, ferris wheel, merry mix-up and rotary swing. Gross Shetland Pony rides were also available.

Several businesses paid for advertising in the premium book. Keep Kissable in Clapp's Classy Clothes, Dine at The Martha Café (All women cooks), "It Pays to buy good stock", Ebert Fur Farm, and the Golden Rule Store, McCook's Friendly Store, were examples of the ads.

In order to have funds to build a permanent building for merchants, a group of merchants contracted to pay for a space of 12 feet wide and 10 feet deep for the price of \$100.00. The contract stated that upon payment of the full amount the space shall be the exclusive property of the purchaser for exhibit purposes. At the end of ten consecutive years, beginning with August 1931, the entire building would become property of the Red Willow County Fair. Spaces were to be drawn and assigned to purchasers. Several businesses purchased more than one space. Spaces not sold were assigned to the county.

Purchasers included the following: McCook Ice Cream Company, Ideal Laundry, McCook Equity Exchange, Jennings & Hoyt, Hayter Electric Company, McCook Chamber of Commerce, Gregg Furniture Company, Bullard Lumber Company, Walker Printing Company, McCook Hardware, Nebraska Power and Light Company, McCook Auto Company, Nutt and Sliger, and D.G. Divine. A governing board of the Merchants Building was formed and approved new tenants and sub leases, determined improvements and handled complaints.

The request for funds to the County Commissioners for year 1932 was made November 30. Included in the request were funding for insurance, gravel for streets, electric line work, building materials, posts, gas and oil for the upkeep of the fair grounds.

Requests were also made to cover losses on the 1931 fair of \$1554.82 and partial payment on the merchant's building of \$1000.00. \$5500.00 was also owed to the First

National Bank for rebuilding the grandstand and other buildings damaged by the 1930 windstorm. Request for funding for the 1932 fair was \$2000.00, for a total request of \$10,054.82.

A check that had not been cashed with made out to Elmer Kay for twenty-five cents. The letter accompanied the check was from I.M. Smith, dated August 28, 1931. It stated the "I came into Fair Grounds by way of the Flying Machine Route after time of tickets. So, I send you 15cents for the evening service."

1932

The Red Willow County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution on May 3, 1932 stating the following: "WHEREAS, the matter of the Red Willow County Fair for the year 1932 has been brought to the attention of this board for consideration as to the availability of the usual appropriation for purposes of the 1932 County Fair;

AND WHEREAS, considering the unusually low prices and values of farm products and consequent scarcity of ready money attendant thereto; the unusually depressed condition of business in general; and in view of the fact that a four-day Golden Jubilee Celebration to be held on June 15 to 18th 1932, is to be sponsored by the McCook Chamber of Commerce; it would seem that our County Fair Board would be operating under extreme disadvantages and could hardly hope to go through with a successful 1932 fair, and to guard against the possibility of future loss in connection with said County Fair, this board makes the following recommendations:

BE IT RESOLVED that on account of the above mentioned matters and the extreme difficulty this board is experiencing in meeting the current unavoidable expenses of the county, the County Fair Board is requested to consider these matters well, with a view of calling off the 1932 fair, if such action seems necessary. Commissioners were L. E. Moore, A. E. Allen, and W. A. Irons. Board members appointed were J.N. Townley and C.S. Thompson who both served for two years.

There was no other documentation concerning the outcome of the resolution. However, the fairgrounds did have an interesting guest on the evening of September 28. Earlier in the day, Franklin Roosevelt, accompanied by Senator George Norris, stopped in McCook, on Mr. Roosevelt's whistle stop presidential campaign tour. At the railroad station, thousands appeared, according to the McCook Daily Gazette report, to listen to the presidential candidate tell his story and proclaim the qualities of the Nebraska Senator.

That evening Senator Norris spoke to another huge crowd at the ballpark at the fairgrounds and he endorsed Mr. Roosevelt. For years, Senator Norris had been

attempting to gain support for the Tennessee Valley Authority Project, and historians stated that Roosevelt had pledged that he would support the project if elected. (Roosevelt won the election and The Tennessee Valley Project did get completed. This author's statement). (Credit should also be given to Walt Sehnert, who wrote about the event in his McCook Daily Gazette column on December 8, 2008, titled "When FDR Came to McCook".)

1933

There was no fair during the years of 1933-1935, due to the depression and the drought. Board members named that year were Fred Wiggins and R.O. DeMay.

1934

In November, 1934 the usual request for funds was presented to the commissioners. Included in the request were the following:

Note for balance of old indebtedness for improvements to First National Bank in amount of \$1000.00 plus 8% interest.

Insurance premiums for 24 buildings on the Fair Grounds in estimated amount of \$318.53.

Balance on material bill to Bullard Lumber Co. in amount of \$359.17.

Material for new roof covering for Barns # 1, 2, 3 and 4 in amount of \$500.00.

Regular and usual appropriation for County Fair purposes, (including projected premiums for 1935 fair in amount of \$2000.00) for a total request of \$4257.70.

1935

Board members appointed were W.H. Meyers and Don Thompson, Jr. After the devastation of the 1935 flood to the county and the continued drought conditions, there was no fair.

1936

Times were improved and the fair board became active again. A memorandum identifying fair board members stated the following:

District 1 Fred Clark, Marion, expires, January 1937, R. O. Demay, Danbury, expires 1939, Fred Wiggins, Lebanon, expires 1938

District 2 Verle Moore, Bartley, expires 1937, J.V. Harrison, Indianola, expires 1939, W.H. Mallick, Indianola, expires 1938

District 3 J.F. Cordeal, McCook, expires 1937, D. L. Thompson, expires 1939

Present officers: W.H. Mallick, Indianola, President, Joe V. Harrison, Indianola, Vice President, John F. Cordeal, McCook, Treasurer, and Elmer Kay, Secretary. (Note that Elmer Kay lived on the grounds and horse racing was his passion. Due to his interest there were many horses that were stalled on the Fair Grounds year around)

Elmer Kay, Don Thompson and John Cordeal served on the executive committee. At the fair board meeting it was noted that Ira Neal was appointed in place of Verle Moore and Fred Clark was appointed to take Mr. Cordeal's position.

The program for the County Fair had the dates of August 11-14. The introduction in the premium list invited everyone to the fair and there would be no admission fee charged at the main gate, but there would be charges for the grandstand and quarter-stretch.

Afternoon programs included horse races, both harnesses and running racings with legalized pari-mutuals. Auto racing was scheduled for Friday afternoon. Dr. Willis, known for his show horses, directed a horse show on Tuesday and Wednesday evening and several acts were contracted to perform between classes. On Thursday and Friday evenings miniature Auto races were scheduled. The program stated, "These small racing cars are very powerful and fast, and races of this kind have never been held in this locality."

Midway attractions were furnished by J.L. Landes Greater Shows. Arrangements were made with the Iniman Flying Circus to appear on Friday and Saturday of Fair Week and rides would be offered at fifty cents per person in large tri-motored cabin plans. A parachute drop was scheduled for Friday. A "Beauty Pageant" was scheduled for Friday evening with coronation ceremonies to crown the queen of the fair. Bonnie Lue Boner was named queen and received \$25.00. Second place of \$10.00 went to Helen Henderson and third place was awarded to Genevieve Carmichael. Jessie Cotton was awarded fourth and Bessie Schultsmeier received fifth. Third, fourth, and fifth places each received \$5.00. The McCook Daily Gazette furnished the prize money.

Livestock exhibitors were asked to arrange promptly for the number of stalls or pens required as no tents or temporary quarters would be available. Entries will be refused once the barns are filled. This fair was billed, "Biggest Event of the year".

4-H Club exhibits were in charge of Donald Thompson, son of Don. L. Thompson. Winners of the following groups received a trip to 4-H Club week in Lincoln: Hereford breed club, shorthorn calf, angus beef calf, Poland china pig, duroc jersey pig, spotted Poland pig, first place in livestock demonstration, best exhibit of articles required in Girl's room, patchwork pillow, best exhibit in cooking, best exhibit in canning, best exhibit in underwear and highest ranking home economics demonstration team. A trip to the state fair was awarded to the highest-ranking boy and girl in the health contest. Mr. A. Barnett of McCook contributed twenty-five dollars to help in paying the expenses to Lincoln. The Fox Theater donated 10% of their receipts of their show on August 6 to the fair.

A letter from Roy Owen to Elmer Kay requested that Elmer save him 10 stalls as he would be late getting to the fair. He stated several stables were going to California and he would be there. Elmer Kay sent a telegram stating entries could not be accepted without payment of forty-five dollars. Later a telegram response from Mr. Owen requested, "Get money from Mr. Stoll. Show him wire". A hand-written note by Elmer Kay was on the wire and confirmed that Mr. Stoll had paid.

1937

August 10 through 13 were the dates of the 1937 county fair. Due to the generosity of the McCook Chamber of Commerce and the business and professional men (no women mentioned yet), there would be no admission charged to enter the grounds. The only charges would be for the grandstand and quarter stretch.

The afternoon program consisted of horse races, both harness and running races with special acts between races. On Friday afternoon the auto races were run directed by Tom Holden, Denver, Colorado. A change was made with carnivals and the STATE FAIR SHOWS, billed as the largest railroad carnival traveling in the west, was on the midway.

Again the "Ted North Players" were secured for the night grandstand evening show, since 1931. The Tuesday program was "Two men on a horse", a story of racehorses and women, with vaudeville numbers between acts. "Girl meets boy" was the play on Wednesday and Thursday featured "Old fashioned minstrel show: with the entire company appearing in the production. The closing night features "Big Musical Whoopee Frolic", a program consisting entirely of vaudeville acts. The fair board again billed the fair as the "Biggest Event of the Year."

Exhibit classifications remained the same as the previous year. However, the premium list now included a division for old ladies. Those competing must be over 65. It was noted that the grandstand night program admission was 25 cents and the afternoon racing program was 50 cents per person. For an extra 15 cents one could reserve a chair with cushions. There was no local business advertising in the premium book. It can be assumed that the local businesses opted for the free admission support.

World War II Crisis

1938

The only document reviewed for this year was a letter from R.A. Young with a check for \$50.00 to support the Boy and Girl Exhibits at the fair. The letter stated, "We certainly hope this money will be of some inspiration to the farm boys and girls of our county in carrying out the program laid out by their respective leaders." This affirmed the belief that 4-H at that time was only for rural youth. There were no documents concerning a fair.

1939-1945

Due to the crisis of World War II, there were no fairs during these years. W.C. Henderson was appointed a board member but only served one year. No other board members were appointed until 1945. Those members were Jim Corcoran, Albert Kircher and Nick Dempewolf.

1946

The Red Willow County Fair was held August 20-23. This was the first fair after the war and was made possible with assistance from the Chamber of Commerce, many businessmen, and the County Commissioners. A rodeo was the afternoon entertainment on the first two days with stock being furnished by Mr. Lee Case of Sutherland, Nebraska, coming to McCook directly from the Burwell, Nebraska rodeo. The evening programs featured the "Fun Fare Follies," a complete two-hour program of "hilarious" entertainment, according to the Fair Board. On Thursday auto races were

held in the afternoon and on Friday, both afternoon and evening, Roy F. Good's Thrill Show was featured. It can be noted that this was the first time that no horse racing was held during the fair. "Hales' Shows of Tomorrow" were on the midway all four days of the fair.

Superintendents were: Everett Sliger, R. McNew, Albert Kircher, Clair Kellogg, Harlan Richards, Carol Fitch, Mrs. Otto Randal, Mrs. Lester Korf, Mrs. Carl Neubauer, Mrs. D.T. Fifer, Mrs. Cletis Norman, Mrs. F.N. Weiland, Mrs. E.B. Olson, Clyde Noyes, Anne Bute, Cletis Norman, Wm. Meyers, Emmett L. Trospen, Dr. M. Campbell and Rolland Larmon.

Don Thompson was now the Secretary of the Fair. During the year a resignation was received from Wm. Meyers and he stated, "If you can find a volunteer of the caliber of the present board members, you should do well".

A new addition to the fair was the calf "catch-it-and-you-can have-it" contest. 4-H boy members were eligible to enter to encourage the feeding of 4-H Club Baby Beeves in the county. Members who caught calves then fattened them and brought them to the fair the following year. Donors of the calves required the members to send them a progress report every three months.

The rules stated, "Boys who wish to enter the contest will draw for a chance to catch a calf. No more than two contestants will be permitted in the ring for each calf." The proceeds from the sale of the animal at the end of the following fair went to the boys.

Several new board members were named. Cleith Green, Clyde Noyes and Walter Hill accept the responsibility.

1947

It was county fair time for three days instead of four, on August 27, 28 and 29. Afternoon programs on Wednesday, August 27 and again on Thursday, were motorcycle racing and fair type acts in between races. A thrill and stunt show was held on Friday afternoon. These thrill shows generally featured acts where one car jumped over several other cars and motorcycle riders doing tricks.

The evening grandstand show was "Flying High", a revue of different types of musical, tumbling, trapeze and juggling acts. There was a carnival, but the name was not listed.

Instructions were very detailed about entering which included going to the secretary's office and secure an exhibitor number and then taking your exhibits to the superintendent of the class or section where the entries would be judged. One could not enter more than one exhibit in a class, except boys and girls who would request having more than one entry in the class. All livestock classes were open to all counties in

southwestern Nebraska, northwestern Kansas and eastern Colorado. Copies of pedigrees were required to be examined by the superintendent and the judges. Purebred exhibitors were required to appear before the executive committee when requested to give satisfactory evidence of the correctness of pedigrees and registration.

4-H rules required that members must complete their record books and have them approved by the club leaders and extension agent before they could receive their premium check. Premiums ranged from fifty cents for first to two dollars and clothing and most cooking exhibits had a first-place premium of fifty cents. A five-dollar premium was paid for blue, three dollars for red, and two dollars for white in the livestock division. Again the "Catch-It-And-You-Can-Have-it" contest was held.

New board members were C.D. Kellogg, Leo Haag and Lawrence Corcoran.

1948

County agent Clyde Noyes left his post on March 1, so resigned from the fair board. Harold Fleming filled the position and was responsible for agriculture for 4-H. Nick Dempewolf was president of the fair board, Leo Hoag, vice president, Don Thompson, secretary, Frieda Olson, treasurer, and Clark Jorgensen was the promotion manager. Superintendent changes from previous year were Clair Kellog and Tollie Dedman.

The Junior Chamber of Commerce was an additional sponsor of the fair, along with business and professional men of the county, county commissioners and McCook Chamber of Commerce.

Paul Long Rodeo was the special entertainment for Sunday afternoon and Monday and Tuesday nights. Special entertainment events were trick riding and roping and a schooled Brahma bull. Judging of livestock was held in front of the grandstand on Monday and Tuesday in the afternoon, along with 4-H club dress revue and the 4-H calf catching contest.

The premium book still listed saddle horses as an entry. Cattle breeds were Aberdeen Angus, Galloway, Hereford, Shorthorn, Polled Shorthorn, Milking Shorthorn, Red Polled, Ayrshire, Guernsey, Holstein and Jersey. Breeds of swine were Chester White, Duroc Jersey, Hampshire, Poland China and Spotted Poland. Cream pies were not eligible for entry. There were 38 separate classes for embroidery and 15 for cut work. In the clothing exhibit list were wool and rayon dresses. It could be assumed that the Girl's wash dress may have been made from cotton.

In the 4-H division several new projects were listed including: Learning to be a Homemaker, Learning to Sew, Summer Wardrobe, Winter Wardrobe, Hows and Whys,

and Learning to Cook. Other exhibits had to be from a specialized club such as Garden Clubs, Electrical Clubs, Soil Conservation Clubs and Yard Beautification.

Special awards were given by the AK-SAR-BEN. One of the special awards was for best all-around exhibitor in home economics projects and agricultural projects.

1949

Entertainment for the fair on August 14-16 included a special presentation of Queen of the Day, modeled after a popular television show at the time. Contestants described their life story and the audience responded with applause to select the winner who received special gifts, including large appliances, and they were crowned Queen of the Day. (If there were other criteria or judges, this writer does not remember, but does remember watching the grandstand show.) Retailers from the area donated the prizes. The Queen winner received: refrigerator, radio-phonograph combination, luggage, coffee service, floor lamp, electric mixer, roaster, and iron, set of silverware and a watch. The second Queen won a table model radio-phonograph, three-piece set of luggage, a watch and a toaster. The third Queen was awarded an electric sweeper, portable radio, and a watch.

The Vaudeville Theatres was contracted with to provide the acts at the afternoon show which included The Burbanks, Freddie and Gale La Rue, Barker and Friel, Morrie & Josephine, and a master of ceremonies. Cost of the contract was \$800.00. Admission was fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children. A band concert preceded the show. At that time the grandstand had a band stage attached to the east side of the covered red grandstand.

A change in the premium book now listed professional men and women of McCook were assisting with the fair. It is the first time that professional women were listed. The community donated funds and prizes for the afternoon show. Lyle DeMoss of radio station WOW was master of ceremony for the afternoon show.

Paul Long Rodeo made its second appearance at the fair. The rodeo program included the grand entry, bareback riding, calf roping, trick roping, bareback bronc, saddle bronc, more trick riding and a trained Brahma bull, bulldogging, trained mules, and bull riding.

Commercial exhibitors were solicited for the commercial building. The program did not list who provided the carnival. Program sponsors were: ACME printing, Gierharts, KBRL, H.C. Clapp, Swans Furniture, Hinky-Dinky, Reliable Typewriter Company,

Southwest Implement Co., DeGroff's, Ideal Launderers and Dry Cleaners, Millers Cloverleaf Dairy, First National Bank and Prest Drug.

The score sheet for the collective agricultural exhibit was published which included judging on decoration, arrangement and neatness, quality, varieties of entries, and quantity. The overall winner received a five- dollar prize.

School exhibits listed 138 potential classes. The county superintendent of schools was supervisor of the exhibits. 4-H exhibits were entered at different times with foods on Friday, agriculture on Saturday morning, and livestock had to be in place by 9:30 A.M. on Sunday. Crocheting was a new class for the year for 4-H in home economics and sheep was an addition in agriculture.

The McCook Junior Chamber of Commerce advertised in the premium book that they would be bringing Spike Jones to the McCook City Auditorium on Monday, August 29 for a 2 ½ hour show. (This writer also remembers attending this show.)

The 1949 fair was anything but successful. (This writer well remembers going with my father, Don Thompson, to attend several Kansas fairs to watch the shows that were being offered so that the entertainment would be attractive to the patrons of the 1949 fair. The entertainment from the 1948 fair had been highly criticized by McCook residents, although the same entertainment was at the Hitchcock County fair and the fair did quite well. The entertainment came and performed and there was a very poor turnout. The writer remembers being awakened and hearing my father crying because the fair had lost so much money, and he had tried so hard. It was a sobering sight to see my father in that misery and then this writer began to recognize the risks that are taken by a fair board to attempt to please the public.)

B.B. Duckworth and Cletus Norman were named to the fair board. There were challenges ahead.

The Fifties and Sixties

1950

After the previous year's results there were no more risks to be taken until the public was ready to again support the fair in a way to make it enjoyable and affordable. The decision was made to have a 4-H fair and to encourage 4-H youth to exhibit their projects. The county agents, Bob Schick and Anne Bute then organized the three-day event.

More than 500 exhibits were presented on entry day August 14. Swine, sheep and beef were judged on the 15th with dress revue judging at 3:00. On the last day of the fair a public dress revue was held at the fairgrounds, and then there were games and races for the 4-H members. Exhibits were released at 4:00. Later in the month the District Dairy Show was held at the fairgrounds on July 24th. The McCook Cats semi pro baseball team played their games at the fairgrounds ballpark during the season.

1951

A full-page advertisement in the McCook Daily Gazette on August 11 identified the fair as the "1951 Junior Fair" and stated that residents should support the "citizens of tomorrow". "They will be competing for State Fair and Ak-Sar-Ben trips. It is your duty to support the work that drives them to be better citizens of tomorrow."

The exhibits were entered on August 13. Judging of home economics exhibits and dress revue occurred that afternoon. The next day was the livestock show. Winners included Veda Mae Shuetz, and Wayne Potthoff, beef, Donnie and Bobby Thompson, breeding beef, and Carlton O'Dea and Doris Wilcox for dairy.

A public dress revue proceeded the Share of Fun contest held at the City Auditorium. Dress revue winners were Ruth Ann Linneman and Donna Wallen, champions, and

reserve champions were Lenora Norman and Dorothy Linneman. The champions won a trip to state fair. There were 20 clubs entered in the talent contest, each performing for four to six minutes.

1952

Another junior fair was held August 14-16 with a similar format, except the dress revue and Share of Fun contests were held the second night. Livestock winners included: Don Hauxwell and Carlton O'Dea, Dairy; Bobby Thompson, grand and reserve breeding beef; Jerda Thompson and Sherry Weber, grand and reserve market beef. All winners of beef and breeding beef were members of the Driftwood Feeders Club, led by Claude Cappel.

The District Dairy Show was held on the 16th with representatives from 12 counties from Nebraska and Northwest Kansas participating. A home economics judging contest was also held the morning of the dairy show.

Business supporters of the junior fair were McCook Equity Exchange, McCook National Bank, Richmond Produce, McCook Seed and Hardware, Red Willow Equipment, Gale Grain and Fuel, Frink Cheese Company Miller's Cloverleaf Dairy and Western Oliver Sales. Norris Weyenth and Bert Bradshaw began their fair board service.

1953

Thanks to the Junior Chamber of Commerce the face of the fair was more than a junior show. A press release on August third announced that the JC's have received the franchise to hold the Mrs. Nebraska Contest during the fair. The winner will be selected to attend the National Finals in Asbery Park, New Jersey. In the process a local winner will be selected the first night of the fair.

Entertainment would be added to the fair along with a parade the first afternoon. The parade was dominated by mounted riders, including the 100 Plum Creek Riders from Lexington, Nebraska. Floats featured the contestants and represented several businesses, and local youth clubs. The McCook and Maywood Saddle Clubs also appeared, along with the Shrine Band and the Colorado Hillbillies. Highlight of the parade was the appearance of Bobby Bensen, B-Bar B rider and radio star singer and storyteller.

Exhibit entries were made the morning of August 10 and dress revue judging was held after the parade. That evening was the Jamboree where Mrs. McCook was selected, and Bobby Bensen performed. Contestants included: Shirley Kelley, Jean Smith, Betty

Grant, Pat Ford, Darline Stone, Lillian Best, Ann Hileman, Eunice Messinger and Enid Hillsinger. Contestants appeared in swimsuits and formals and answered questions. Pat Ford was named Mrs. McCook and Ann Hileman was second, making both eligible for the Mrs. Nebraska Contest.

There were 52 entries in the fashion revue which proceeded the evening Mrs. Nebraska selection. Style show winners were Donna Wallen and Charlene Nicholson, with Dorothy Linneman and Doris Wilcox named reserve champions. The Jamboree show featured Morton the Magician, and a rope artist, Joyce Moreland. Winner of the Mrs. Nebraska event was from Hastings, and McCook's second place entry, Ann Hileman wowed the judges and was runner up in the contest. A dance was held at the City Auditorium with music by the Harmonics.

Livestock judging was held the third day and winners included: Carlton O'Dea and Doris Wilcox, dairy; Carlton O'Dea, both champion and reserve beef; and Bobby Thompson had both grand and reserve in the breeding beef. Livestock shows were held on the grassy area between the red cattle barns. The barns were open at both ends and straw was piled high around the cattle that were stalled there. Judges for the 4-H events were Guy Baker, livestock, Mary Elliott, foods and health, Paul Cook, agriculture, and Mrs. Guy Lamb, clothing and dress revue. Eighteen schools entered the education exhibits. County Superintendent Edna Bratton organized that exhibit.

Entertainment for the third night was the Chitwood Dare Devil Show, a well-known car and motorcycle thrill show. There was a midway with the Gorie United Shows Carnival.

1954

Pre-fair judging contests were held prior to the fair for foods and clothing. Joan, Nancy and Jeanette Thompson were winners.

A parade started the fair on August 11-13. Co parade chairman Forest Dillman and Al Roth put together an 18- float parade. They hired professional designer, parade builder Earl Hammond, from Aurora, Nebraska, to design 12 of the floats. The lead float following the American Legion was a "metallic paper float with the county's most beautiful girls", according the McCook Daily Gazette, August 12, 1954, edition.

Another Jamboree was on the agenda and it featured Lee and Williams Varieties, a ten-act revue held nightly at the fairgrounds grandstand. The Maddo Brothers Carnival was on the midway. The same judging schedule was in place for the 4-H exhibits. This again was a junior fair with no open class exhibits.

1955

Again, the fair faced financial problems and the drought did not provide much incentive for a prosperous retail year. It was back to a 4-H fair.

(This writer remembers visiting with the Extension agents and suggesting that they have a carnival or fun night for the 4-H members and their families during the fair. That idea was incorporated into the fair agenda, along with naming a 4-H king and queen. It could be stated that it was the first 4-H Carnival held in the county.)

August 6-8 were the dates of the fair with the District Dairy Show being held on the 6th. Entries were judged following the show. Clark Jorgensen, the McCook Chamber Director, took over reins of organizing the show. Selecting a District Dairy Queen was a part of the show. Anita Mock from Holbrook took the honors and was eligible to compete in the state contest. McCook was one of eight area sites in the state for the event.

As a side note, the District Beef show was also held at the fairgrounds in October each year during Teacher's Convention time. That show area was a grassy area east of the east barn. Youth from southwest Nebraska and northwest Kansas were eligible to compete. It was not unusual to have 250 cattle entered. The livestock sale was held the day after the show. A king and queen were also crowned at an evening event. (This writer was honored to be the queen of the 1954 show and Carlton O'Dea had taken the king honor the previous year.)

The livestock judging winners were Vicky Spencer with both overall grand and reserve champion beef with angus steers. Carlton O'Dea had champion shorthorn steer and Larry Zwickle had the champion Hereford steer. Carlene Moffit and Sammie Motter won the dairy show, Bobby Logan had champion barrow and Larry Leibrandt had the champion boar. Jimmie North won the sheep show.

Following the livestock show there were races and games for the families. In the evening there were more games, dancing, and the King and Queen were chosen. Contestants were selected on their achievements and members voted for the royalty. George Pearson was King, and Charlene Nicholson was queen. The other finalists were Don Hauxwell, Carlton O'Dea, Jerda Thompson and Bonita Boyd.

The McCook Cats were still playing baseball at the Fairgrounds park, along with the American Legion team. One newspaper ad in July stated that the Cats needed 1500 fans at their next game to stay in the NIL league. The goal was attained, and the Cats continued for the remainder of the season. Dale Thompson became a member of the board, following in his brother's and father's footsteps.

1956

The new baseball team was on the scene at the Fairgrounds park that was newly sodded. The McCook Braves, a franchise of the Minnesota Braves was playing in the Nebraska State League.

A Press release for the Red Willow County Fair appeared on July 29 and announced that Les Winget would be presenting a rodeo on August 13 and 14. The McCook Daily Gazette article stated that there would be acts by Cecil Cornish with his liberty horses and trained horse, Smokey. The clowns would be Pistol Holiday and Buddy Heaten. There would be prize money for the traditional saddle bronc, bareback, steer wrestling (no longer called bulldogging), calf roping and bull riding.

Another pre-fair press release in the McCook Daily Gazette on August 7 stated that 60 brahma calves that have never been roped were in the stock. Also "Tom-Tom", a saddle bronc that had never been ridden and "High Tower" a bronc on ridden for two seconds would be at the fair. Top cowhands who were coming from Oklahoma were Bill Agee, Andy Curtis, Randy Curtis, Bob Ferguson, Tex Flynn and Dick Timber, from California was also committed. The rodeo was an RCA (Rodeo Cowboys Association) approved event.

The District Dairy Show was held earlier than the fair on August 6. Entries came from 13 Nebraska and Kansas counties.

Again, this was a 4-H fair with no open class entries. The schedule was similar comparable to previous years, with entries made and judged for home economics and agriculture on August 13. Livestock showing and judging was on the 14th. It was the 8th straight year for showing a champion at the fair by Carlton O'Dea with his champion steer. Susie Spencer had reserve champion and reserve breeding beef. Jeanette Thompson won the breeding beef and Larry Ruppert was champion dairy with Diane McGuire as reserve.

On the 15th a livestock judging contest was held in the morning. Previous livestock judging contests were held prior to the regular livestock show. Densel O'Dea was a winner in previous years and (this writer was privileged to be on a team in 1953 that won a trophy at the Nebraska State Fair.) There was no record available of the winners for the 1956 fair in livestock judging. Also, on the 15th was a tractor driving contest and the dress revue was before the rodeo at the grandstand.

Three thousand people attended the first rodeo, with standing room only. Roy Lewis, a cowboy from Trenton, Nebraska (who often roped with Tom Kiplinger in team roping) won the calf roping the first night. It could be said that the public was happy to have a high caliber rodeo at the fair. Kenneth Spencer began his fair board tenure.

Six 4-H clubs competed in a Share of the Fun Contest held at the City Auditorium following the fair. (This writer served as the mistress of ceremonies.) A district contest was held on August 27 to determine winners eligible for the state fair. Districts were set up as the state fair contest was getting too large with entries eligible from each county. District winners competed at the state fair in the Open-Air Auditorium one night of the fair.

1957

The fair was August 12, 13 and 14 with pre-fair contests slated for 4-Her's, FFA members and adults. The first contest was the demonstration contest held at the city auditorium. Jerda Thompson won the event with a demonstration on making pies. There was no information available on other placings in the contest. There was also a music identification contest and home economics judging contest. August 9 was the date for the livestock judging contest, followed by a sack lunch in Kelley Park. Another new contest was land judging, open to 4-H, FFA and adults.

Premium money was now available for open class exhibits. Open class exhibitors checked into the fair office building to receive their exhibitor numbers and then took their exhibits to the exhibit building for entry. At this time the old white exhibit hall was still being used.

Several trophies were awarded, and the outstanding crochet exhibit was won by Mrs. A.F. Wegener. Best corn was won by John Crocker and Marvin Hoyt received the Best Wheat Exhibit trophy. The outstanding 4-H boy was won by Lonnie Weskamp and Geraldine Cappel took home the outstanding 4-H girl award. 4-H Livestock beef winners were Vicki Spencer and Joanne Thompson and Roland Welch and Raymond Schow showed winning swine. There was not an open class division for livestock. Mrs. Larry Stone received the outstanding commercial exhibit trophy.

A week prior to the rodeo, bull rider Tex Tinkle and his wife Katherine painted windows to advertise the rodeo. More than 50 downtown store windows were recipients of their talents.

It was rodeo time each evening and there were presale tickets available for purchase at the Chamber of Commerce office for \$2.00 for reserve seats and \$1.50 for general admission. Each carnival was proceeded with an organ concert and a special event. One night featured a greased pig contest, the second night was a livestock review of winners in the livestock show and the last night was the dress revue and presentation of trophies. Jerda Thompson and Geraldine Cappel won the dress revue honors.

First day visitors to the fair was estimated at 5,000 and 3,000 attended the rodeo. The featured acts included roman horse riding and clowns. This rodeo contractor listed bull dogging instead of steer wrestling as an event.

1958

Film and recording star Eddie Dean was the featured attraction of the L Bar M Rodeo. On August 7, 8 and 9. Over 3,500 packed into the rodeo grounds. Additional bleachers were obtained to boost the seating capacity to 5,000. Many ads, sponsored by local businesses, appeared before the fair. Twenty-five commercial booths filled the merchant's building.

Eddie Dean conducted a quick draw contest each night to determine finalists a contest the last night of the fair. Using cap guns and their holsters, the youth competed for a pony which was won by Dennis Carter. He was from California and had spent the summer with his grandparents. Follow up articles did not mention if the pony made it to California.

The rodeo was not without some problems. Ray Kilgore from Oklahoma, who was serving as a pick-up man after winning the calf roping was shot by a blank from a gun used in a clown act. He required surgery the next day to remove wadding from his chest. Cowboys came as far east as New York, west from California, north from North Dakota, and south from Texas. Two southwest Nebraska participants, Gene Stamn and Allen Baker placed in the calf roping. Fay Reynolds from Austin, Texas, won the overall honors.

The County Wheat Queen contest contestants were introduced the last night of the fair and seven young women, who were daughters of wheat farmers, were involved in the contest. Marilyn Grafton was crowned queen and Jerda Thompson and Geraldine Cappel were second and third. Marilyn then represented the county in the state Wheat Queen Contest held during the Wheat Grower's Convention.

On the final night kiddie rides were just ten cents each. The Heart of America Shows began its long tenure of bringing a carnival to McCook for the fair. Their contract was usually the first to be signed to coordinate with their schedule of fairs and the dates of the next fair were then set.

1959

Stars from the "Gunsmoke" television series, Doc, Kitty and Chester, highlighted the fair held August 12-14. The personalities shared the stage with the Frontier Boys western

band and Joanie during the three-day rodeo. It was a return trip for Doc who had appeared once in Culbertson 30 years prior to this appearance.

Over 6,000 packed the stands the first night of the fair and the overall rodeo attendance was 16,000. The three stars made a visit to the hospital one morning and spent time with a little boy named Tommy who had been injured in a farm accident. (The second evening of the fair, this writer's parents, Don and Marie Thompson, entertained the performers at their farm home for dinner. It was an informal affair with fair board members, entertainers, and rodeo and carnival managers in attendance. It provided a chance for everyone to relax and learn about the life of an entertainer. Since I was working in the fair office that year, I was able to attend and spent my time with Amanda Blake. They truly enjoyed the time at a farm, and we enjoyed them.)

Heart of America Shows were again on the midway and Les Winget provided the rodeo. Sixty-two cowboys competed in the event. The rodeo purse was \$1,215.00 and the rodeo clown was Junior Marks from Cleaburn, Texas. He became involved in a fight after the rodeo the second night with the top slugger of the McCook Braves baseball team. The fight occurred off the rodeo grounds in front of a downtown restaurant and both filed complaints against one another. They appeared in front of local judge Clyde Starrett the next morning. The judge did not believe that the recollections from each party were valid and refused to rule on the case. Therefore, the case was dropped, and each party withdrew their complaints.

Open class entries continued to rise and the same format of obtaining the exhibitor number at the red office continued. This building had a front office with a door to the back area where the rodeo accepted entries and the board members took care of their business. There was a large roll top desk and a safe. There were hard luck stories from cowboys who could hardly scrape up enough money for an entry fee. Others were trying to find free feed for their horses and occasionally a distraught spouse would be seeking assistance. Complaints came to that office and not unlike previous years and the years that followed, everyone was treated as important.

There were pre-fair 4-H contests and after fair contests. All 4-H placings were published in the local newspaper for the first time instead of publicizing only the livestock and dress revue champions. A song contest was added to the 4-H contests, along with the Share of Fun contest. The Button and Bows club of Danbury won the Song contest and the Busy Little Bees of Danbury won the Share of the Fun event. Another new event was a soil judging contest held on the last day of the fair, along with the tractor driving. Winners of the fashion show were Anita McBride and Nancy Thompson.

The traditional Wheat Queen Contest winner was crowned on the last night of the fair and Jerda Thompson received the honor. Marvin Hoyt was named the outstanding wheat exhibitor for the third year.

Later in August the 4-H District Dairy Show was held at the fairgrounds. Over 150 entries competed in the event.

1960

The fair board received a \$500.00 award from the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben to make improvements for future fairs. They also provided monetary awards for youth events at the fair. Those awards were based on number and quality of exhibits for an exhibitor by utilizing a point system. Winners were notified when they received their premium checks at the completion of their project year.

FFA appeared in the premium books and only members of FFA Chapters in Red Willow County were eligible. They had to exhibit in open class unless there was a special class such as farm mechanics designed for their classroom projects. The rules stated, "FFA boys wear jackets for showing".

Kid's night carnival rides were offered the first night of the fair and merchants were involved by selling tickets prior to the fair. Specialized events before the rodeo were Wheat Queen Contest winner announcement, selection of champion steer in front of the grandstand, a greased pig contest, and 4-H tractor driving contest. After fair events were 4-H dress revue and share of the fun contest at the city auditorium on August 4, and demonstration contest at the REA building the next day. The 4-H Share of the Fun Contest allowed individual clubs to compete against each other with skits, musical acts, or other skills. The winner then competed at the State Fair in the Open-Air Auditorium against other county winners.

Purple ribbons were awarded in 4-H and the premium book stated that the award designated state fair quality and the exhibit could move forward if it met the county quota for state fair entries. A rule was in place for all open class and youth exhibitors that stated, "Any person who should tear off a premium ribbon, or authorize any other person to do so in presence of awarding committee, shall forfeit the premium and be excluded from competition." This writer assumes that there may have been a past incident, or incidents that prompted this rule.

Another premium book statement stated that should premiums exceed the amount of money available for premiums, the fair management reserved the right to pro-rate the premiums to the amount available. Past experiences with fair expenses prompted that rule. Exhibit halls were open from 11:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. during the fair, except the last night when they closed at 8:00.

Many special awards were listed in the premium books. They included: Outstanding Corn Exhibit, Outstanding Wheat Exhibit, Family Exhibitor's Trophy, Best of Show Yeast

Baking Award, Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, American Shorthorn Association, and McCook Equity Exchange for Champion and Reserve Market Beef, Market Swine, and Dairy. The Ralston Purina Company provided trophies for the champion steer, barrow, and lamb. Duroc swine exhibitors were eligible for special awards.

To involve youth in leadership roles at the fair, several assistant superintendents were named in the livestock areas. Fair superintendents in open class livestock were Griff Weskamp, E.W. Winters and Elmo Harris, with the following assistants: Vicky Spencer, Donnie Thompson, Bob Kelly, Jerry Welch, Lonnie Weskamp and Stephen Harsh. Lester Harsh was superintendent of poultry and Leo and Raymond Haag had agriculture exhibits responsibilities.

There were new names in the Home Economics Division, as well as, those who had served through the years. The list included: Mrs. Doane Trail, Mrs. Ed Peterson, Mrs. Lois Leibrandt, Mrs. Otto Randel, Mrs. Lester J. Korf, Mrs. Carl Neubauer, Mrs. Leonard Holmes, Mrs. A.J. Zimmerman, Mrs. Ed Olson, Mrs. Harold Roberts, Mrs. Lynn Wilcox, Mrs. Clyde Dack, Mrs. Robert Doyle, Mrs. Griff Weskamp, Mrs. Loyall Nicholson, Mrs. Charles Waddell, Mrs. E.E. Quigley, Mrs. Marvin Nelms and Mrs. Otto Weskamp.

The fair could not succeed without sponsors and the following had ads in the printed premium book which was mailed to all boxholders in the county. This printing and mailing expense were included in the fair budget. Sponsors included: Stickney's, McCook Equity Exchange, Empire Drive-In, Hull Oil Co., First National Bank, DeGroff's, Vogue, Larry's Cafe, McCook Beauty Academy, Stockman's Veterinary Supply Co., West Sale Barn, Penney's, Hinky Dinky, McCook Daily Gazette, Walt's Derby, Standard Tank Wagon Service, Ohlsen and Jones Jewelers, Stevens 7 Up, Safeway, Modern Cleaners, Production Credit Association, Modrell's, Modern Cleaners, The Noll Company, Budig Motor Company, Animal Clinic, A & M Rexall and D and S. LeRoy Leibrandt began his service to the fair. At the time of his retirement he had served 43 years on the fair board.

1961

The fair entertainment was headlined by the stars of the television show "Wagon Train". Rodeo contractor Les Winget Enterprises contracted with the county to provide a rodeo and the entertainers. The contract stated that the terms and monetary consideration of this contract shall be as follows: "Party of the first part shall receive a guarantee of \$12,400.00; party of the second part (fair board) shall receive the next \$4,600.00. The balance of the gate receipts above the \$17,000.00 total shall be divided as follows: one-third to party of first part; one-third to party of second part; one-third to "Stars of Wagon Train".

The fair was held on August 3, 4 and 5. There was no information concerning the success of this fair.

1962

The Fair Board requested quotes for two buildings. Butler buildings submitted quotes for a 10x32x8 building for \$1590.00 and for a 12x32x8 building for \$1693.00. No information was available to determine the buildings were erected.

Fair dates were August 1-4. A stage review starring Yogi Bear and huckleberry Hound appeared before the grandstand each evening. Featured in the show were the Gates Sisters who provided guitar renditions with the Space Light Review. Advance tickets were available at a reduced rate.

A major event was the free barbeque on Saturday evening furnished by the McCook Chamber of Commerce and the RVCA (Republican Valley Conservation Association) as a part of the Red Willow Dam Dedication. Over 6,500 participated. St. Catherine's Hospital was a benefactor with 1,000 buns that were left over. Frances Hamler, who operated a locker plant as gave the hospital the beef he purchased in the 4-H livestock sale and then offered to freeze part of the buns for later use by the hospital.

Livestock judging was held on Thursday in the "cleaned-up-fair grounds" as described in a Gazette article. 225 entries competed for awards in the 4-H division, an increase of 30 calves, 10 swine and 10 sheep over the previous year.

The first night of the fair featured the horse show and winners were Vicky spencer was the top winner with Pat Hoyt as reserve champion. Brendon Barger won the beef show and Vicky Spencer was reserve. Vicky was also the top showman. Linda Boner had the champion lamb and Robert and Rod Spencer won the swine championships. In the demonstration contest Shirley Weskamp and Sheila Zicafoose were the winners. They received the opportunity to compete in the state fair contest.

Governor Frank Morrison, who was in McCook for the Red Willow Dam Dedication, made an appearance at the 4-H Livestock Sale and purchased the Champion Steer with a sixty cent a pound price for Brandon Barger's 900-pound animal.

The new ballpark was now built on the north west section of the fairgrounds. It was named Cibola and the Legion and adult teams were enjoying its presence. Virgil Lafferty became a new board member.

1963

July 31 through August 4 were designated fair dates. The first day had the usual 4-H and open class entries and judging. A horse show was the feature for the evening that included adult and junior entries. Winners included Peggy Peters, Vicki Spencer, Willie Peters, Dennis Youngs and Billy McBride. Half price carnival ride tickets were available from local businesses and rides were open from 10:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M.

The Little Britches Rodeo was again the featured entertainment. On the first night many local contestants did well with Barbara McBride winning the barrels, Tom Maddox from Enders winning calf roping in 28 seconds, and Ray Buffington from Wauneta winning the steer wrestling with an outstanding six-point nine drop. Jim Gohl of Culbertson made an appearance in the junior steer riding event. It was estimated that 7,500 attended the first night of the three-day event.

It was a good day for Brendon Barger as he won the champion steer for the second year in a row with his Angus calf. According to the McCook Daily Gazette, Brendon had received a white ribbon in 1958, and the championship was a great way to end his FFA-4-H career.

Kendra Spencer received the reserve championship nod with her Hereford steer. Karl Buchta won the swine show with Robert Spencer receiving reserve. Bob Bonar had the champion sheep. In the breeding show the following day, Charlene Newberry had the champion shorthorn and Paul Newberry was reserve. Robert Spencer won the angus division with Vicky Spencer as reserve. Doug Helberg was the Hereford breed champion. Rod and Robert Spencer won the swine breeding show, and Susan Vaughn was the dairy champion winner with Diane Haag receiving reserve. Rose and Carolyn Weskamp won the sheep ewe contest. There was a separate breeding show showmanship contest.

Eighty head of livestock were sold in the sale on Saturday morning at the West Sale Barn. Bob Bauer purchased the champion steer for \$27.25 a pound, considerably less than the sixty cents a pound Brendon Barger had received for his champion the previous year. This 900-pound steer was donated to Hillcrest Nursing Home.

1964

A Little Britches Rodeo was the major entertainment for the fair August 6, 7 and 8. Floyd Rumford Rodeo from Abbyville, Kansas was the contractor. The contract stated that the producer would furnish the Little Britches Rodeo for three performances including bareback riding, bull riding, saddle bronc riding, calf roping, steer wrestling,

barrel racing, goat tying and pick up men. It also included all labor, chutes, pens, timekeeper, judges, announcer and saddle. Jack Hunter from Ardmore, South Dakota continued to supply the sound system. This contract was for \$3,750.00, considerably less than the previous contracts with Les Winget Enterprises. The County Fair part of the contract was to provide at least \$500.00 in advertising and pay \$187.50 for one half of the special attraction. Billy King from Brownsfield, Texas was the clown. Other special acts were trick riders Bob Partridge and Cay Bernard from Kansas. Joyce Rice did a baton act.

The Heart of America Shows, owned by Ted Cory, was again the carnival for the fair. Generally, the carnival was the attraction that determined the dates for the fair, depending upon its schedule. This carnival was used for many years, prior to their success on the state fair circuit. The contract stated that carnival would pay 15 percent of gross income on rides and shows and \$7.50 for each concession. The show would also pay 20% for over a \$3,000 gross. Obtaining contracts and selecting the shows for entertainment were a main responsibility of the fair board. They were represented at the Nebraska State Fair Managers Association convention each year where many show booking agencies were offering their shows.

The 4-H horse show appeared on the schedule and the finals were held in front of the grandstand the first night of the fair on August 5. An open class horse show was also on the schedule at 2:30, with finals that evening. Some of the winners were Pat Hoyt, Tami Spencer, Ricky McKillip, Janice Poore, Bill Greene and Robert Haag. The 4-H Beef sale was held at the West Sale Barn on Saturday morning.

A new shed with pole centers and metal roof was newly erected. This was the third year the fair had received a \$500.00 grant from Ak-Sar-Ben to upgrade facilities. Another building is planned. Each shed can hold 65 head without providing any room for tack or space between clubs.

The Spencer family won the livestock division Kendra showed an 880-pound Hereford steer and Tami Spencer was reserve. The Spencer brothers, Robert and Rod, won the swine division and Robert won the sheep championship. Reserve champion in the sheep division was Eldon Helberg. In the breeding beef show, Kendra Spencer was champion and sister Tami won reserve champion. The Spencer brothers won the breeding swine and Steve Barger was the sheep winner, with Susie Spencer receiving reserve. The daily cattle division was won by Karen Buchta and Diane Haag was reserve. The McCook Elk's Club purchased the champion steer for forty cents a pound.

The premium book only listed open class and FFA, so it is assumed that a separate 4-H premium book was prepared. A new entry in open class was a class for BEES that included an observation hive, comb honey, one-pound jar of honey, one shallow frame of

honey and one deep frame of honey. Underlined in the flower section was a statement that all flowers must be grown by exhibitor.

1965

There were repeat contractors this year. The Heart of America Shows contract was signed in October of 1964 for the same conditions. Floyd Rumford contracted to present a rodeo for two nights, but it was not listed as a Little Britches Rodeo. The contract included a clown, but no specialty act. Contract price was \$2930.00, and the fair was responsible for advertising, prize money in amount of \$500.00 and all sound equipment and music.

Dates of the fair were August 3-7, a four-day fair with 4-H entries due on July 19, FFA entries on July 20 and Advanced open class by July 29. The fair opened with the carnival rides beginning at 10:00 A. M. on the third. The 4-H horse show preliminaries began at 10:00 and the open class horse show preliminaries were at 2:30 in the afternoon. The finals were held in front of the grandstand at 7:30 that evening.

On Thursday the market swine judging started at 8:30, followed by market lambs and market beeves. The exhibit halls opened at 11:00 A.M. and the carnival began at 5:00. The rodeo was held two nights with car racing on the final night.

A day was devoted to showmanship and breeding cattle. There were some conflicts because dress revue was also scheduled for the morning. Dairy cattle were also shown on Friday. Livestock was moved to the West Sale Barn at 7:00 A. M. for the livestock sale at 9:00. Rod Spencer had the champion market hog, and Linda Bonar had the champion market lamb. Greg Thompson sold his steer for \$31.25 a pound and Brian Lafferty also had a purple ribbon.

New names on the superintendent list were Mrs. Albert Rathe for arts and crafts, Dallas Talkington, FFA, Raymond Schow, Farm Products. Mrs. Herman Leibbrandt, Chickens, Les Horn, horses, Angus Garey, Livestock, 4-H members Janice Poore and Bob Kelly, beef assistants, Lonnie Weskamp, swine and Brendon Barger sheep assistants. Other superintendents and assistants, who had been providing their time and effort through the years were: Griff Weskamp, Elmo Moore, Kenneth Spencer, Dr. John Dorwart, Roger Zinc, Leo Haag, Raymond Haag, Mrs. Doane Trail, Mrs. LeRoy Leibbrandt, Mrs. Eva Peterson, Mrs. Lester Korf, Mrs. Carl Neubauer, and Mrs. Leonard Holmes,

Board members were: Albert Kircher, Nick Dempewolf, Lawrence Cochran, Leo Haag, Bert Bradshaw, Dale Thompson, Kenneth Spencer, Virgil Lafferty and LeRoy Leibbrandt.

1966

It was fair time August 3,4,5 and 6. The billing was Red Willow County Fair and Rodeo. The rodeo was for the first two days with Floyd Rumford, contractor. Cost of the rodeo was \$2,930. And the fair board also provided \$500.00 in prize money and the music. Sharla Turman served as the organist for several years. The Heart of America Shows had the contract for the carnival. The fair received \$1,359.75 for their share of carnival receipts. Jack Hunter again provided the sound.

A special performance by Johnny Western of TV's "Have Gun, Will Travel" show and the Taylor sisters were contracted to perform at 8:00 on Friday. Cost for the event was the first \$600.00 of admissions and then a fifty-fifty split of remaining admissions.

There were 75 horses in the 4-H horse show. Pam Koetter showed the champion steer, a one thousand-pound Hereford. Penny Lafferty was reserve. Linda Bonar had the champion lamb and Tami Spencer was reserve. Karl Buchta showed the champion market swine and Mike Elwood was reserve. Other winners were Dick Haag and Janice Poore in the horse competition.

Car racing was held on August 6 sponsored by the Tri-State Racing Association and the Fair Board was responsible for expenses for sound, advertising, announcer, admission tickets, ticket takers, sellers, ambulance, wrecker, fire truck, two trophies, trophy girls and maintenance and watering of the track. Gate receipts gave the racing association 70 percent for the first \$1,000.00 and then a fifty-fifty split on the remainder of admission receipts.

1967

Jack Hunter was again contracted to provide the sound for the fair. Johnny Wright provided the entertainment and show at 8:00 on August 2nd. His cast of Grand Ole Opry stars included Kitty Wells, Bill Phillips, Ruby Wright, Bobby Wright, Jonny Wright and the Tennessee Mountain Boys Band. The first \$1,000 went to the Grand Ole Opry and then a 50-50 split divided the remainder. Dale Thompson was the secretary manager of the fair.

The Heart of America Shows continued their tenure and their contract was signed in the November of the 1966 with the same conditions. The fair board received \$1,810.24 for its share of the carnival receipts.

Car racing was held the second night of the fair with the North Platte Speedway contracting for the racing. Their contract required a payment of \$750.00 plus 50 percent of the admissions. Keith Loper of McCook managed the racing.

Floyd Rumford Rodeo was again the contractor for the rodeo which was held on August third and fourth with similar conditions requiring a payment of \$2,930.00 plus \$500.00 in prize money. This rodeo did not meet its financial expectations and gate receipts of \$2,317.01 were less than requested in the contract. Rodeo clowns were Snuffy Chancellor and Joey Stevenson, who had a horse named "Warpaint" that was the mascot of the Kansas City Chiefs. Butch Ruby, age 12, from Elk City, Kansas, did Roman riding.

4-H winners included: Tami Spencer, champion beef; Greg Thompson, reserve; Linda Boner, champion sheep; Tami Spencer, reserve; Richard Ruggles, champion swine; Lonnie Moore, reserve; and senior beef champion showman was Stan Moore. The FFA had a separate show in 1966 and 97. Jim Gohl had a purple ribbon. The Driftwood Feeders 4-H club were named the State Fair song contest entry for the county.

Midget racing was held on the last night of the fair. It was contracted with the Rocky Mountain Midget Racing Association of Denver. Their contract requested a guaranteed payment of \$1,400.00 or 45 percent of gate receipts if greater than the guaranteed payment. They guaranteed a minimum of 18 cars to participate.

William D. Koetter was appointed to the fair board.

1968

The first contract for entertainment to perform on July 31 was Myron Floren and supporting cast including Lynn Anderson. Their contract fee was \$4,000.00. The Tom Drake company was the booking agent and the contract was signed in January of 1968. However, on June 13, another contract was made with the Tom Drake Agency for the supporting cast stage show for July 31 with name acts for \$1500. Also, there was a service charge on Jean Shepard Contract for \$65.00. Finally, on June 20, an executed copy of the contract for the appearance of Jean Shepard and The Second Fiddles for July 31 was received. This contract was for \$650.00. It can be assumed from the supporting data that the first contract was canceled.

The newly remodeled poultry barn had 533 fowl entered. The top poultry exhibitor in 4-H was Beverly Hoyt. Champion market beef was shown by Janet Friehe, and it later sold for \$.56 a pound. Tami Spencer showed the reserve champion and Richard Ruggles had the reserve. Champion lamb was shown by Sharon Boner and Lonnie Moore showed the champion hog and champion breeding beef. Stan Moore was reserve in breeding beef competition. Carolyn Neel won the livestock judging contest.

The Heart of America Shows were again on the grounds. Their rides cost thirty cents and thirty-five cents for each rider. The total receipts were over \$20,000 and the fair

board received almost \$2,000 for its share. Thirty local businesses sold tickets prior to the fair for ten cents each. J.C. Penney store sold 3,000 of the pre-fair tickets.

Floyd Rumford Rodeo again provided two rodeos on August 1, and August 2. Their contract was like previous years with a cost of \$2,930. Gate receipts were higher this year with the Fair taking in \$3,539.77. Girls barrel racing was added to the rodeo events. Jack Hunter again provided the sound.

The last night of the fair featured midget racing with the Rocky Mountain Racing Association conducting the races. Their contract was like the previous year, although it did state that admission tickets will be \$1.75 and children fifty cents less.

1969

Floyd Rumford was again the contractor for the rodeo for July 31, and August 1. Cost was \$2,930 with another \$500 for prize money. Gate receipts this year were \$3,0521.51. The fair board was required to provide an organist and sound. Jack Hunter was again contracted for sound.

The Rocky Mountain Racing Association provided the midget car racing at a cost of guaranteed amount of \$1,400 and 55 percent of the gate receipts. The association was to provide 18 midget cars and all track officials, a certificate of their insurance, and an announcer. The fair board provided expenses for sound, advertising, admission tickets, ticket takers and sellers, ambulance, water, water truck and maintenance of the track and trophies.

4-H livestock contest winners were: Randy Hill, champion market beef; Steve Barger, reserve; Gary Buchta, champion swine; Phil Colling, reserve swine; Don Neel, champion lamb; and Linda Boner, reserve lamb. FFA Show winners were Steve Barger, champion and reserve lambs; Rodney Koetter, swine champion; Rod Spencer, champion beef; and Lavern Leibrandt, reserve beef. The champion pen of five was shown by the Tri Valley Hustlers and Rainbow Feeders was reserve. The top senior showman was Dan Colling.

Total livestock numbers as reported by County Agent Bob Klein were: 47 hogs, 32 market sheep, 118 market beef, 17 breeding beef and nine dairy cattle.

A contract was made for a demolition derby held on October 5 with the derby contractor providing a deposit of \$100 for cleanup, a liability insurance policy, and fifty dollars for use of grounds.

Another contract was made with the McCook Saddle Club for the development of an arena that they could use for their club practices.

The Seventies and Eighties

1970

The Korkow Rodeos were the contractors for rodeo on July 30-31. This was an RCA approved rodeo and they provided all stock for a five event RCA approved rodeo, \$1,000 prize money for cowboys, \$150 money for girls barrel race, two pick up men, two judges, two timers, one arena secretary, announcer, all chute help, liability insurance, chutes and arena fencing, approval fee to RCA and the clown-bull fighter. The contract amount was three thousand dollars, the first five thousand gate receipts plus fifty percent of all gate receipts over the first five thousand dollars. The expenses for an RCA rodeo were much higher than the Little Britches Rodeos of the past three years. There is some discrepancy in the fair dates and if this contract was enacted. Jack Hunter again was providing the sound system. Gate receipts for the rodeo were \$3,642.58.

The Heart of America Shows signed a contract for August 1 through August 5 for their carnival with the same stipulations as in previous years. Their address was now Pasadena, Texas. Receipts were \$1,853.66 for the fair.

Peggy Moore showed the champion steer named "Dynamite", a 1,025-pound Hereford that sold for \$.64 a pound. Rod Spencer had the reserve champion, a 1080-pound angus steer. It was 106 degrees on show day and Dale Luther was the judge. There were 60 market hogs and Lonnie Moore showed the champion and reserve champions.

Jan Helberg showed the champion lamb, and Linda Boner was named reserve. Jim Gohl was champion and Rod Spencer had reserve champion in the FFA show. Tom Tirrill, Cal Siegfried and Laverne Leibrandt also had purple ribbons and were in the championship finals. Karen Buchta showed the champion dairy animal.

Another agreement was signed with the World's Champion Daredevils thrill show attraction for a show on August 6. The show received a \$750.00 guarantee and a 50-50 split of all receipts.

1971

Korkow rodeos were again providing the rodeo with the same contract stipulations as the previous year. Jack Hunter continued to provide the sound system. The Heart of

America Shows continue its tenure at the fair. The thrill show was again billed for the fair.

Winners of the 4-H style show were Brenda Orvis and Susan Uerling. The Try and Do Club won the song contest and the right to perform at the state fair.

David Burton showed the champion steer which later sold for \$.65 a pound and Paul Colling had the reserve champion. Purple ribbon contenders for the championships were: Craig Talkington, Brian Lafferty, Lonnie Moore, Tom Tirrill, Don Neel, Dick Koetter and Vicki Waddell. Swine champions were shown by Lonnie Moore and Janice Meyers. Bill Hoyt had the champion breeding sheep.

A series of races sponsored by the Jaycee's were held at the fairground's racetrack. They agreed that the gate receipts would be divided 85 percent to the Jaycee's and after achieving one thousand in receipts the split would be fifty-fifty. Dale Hofman was president of the organization and Gordon Birch was secretary. Elmer Leitner and Keith Downer were named new board members.

1972

The Earnest Tubbs Show from the Grand Ole Opry was the feature attraction on August 2 and the cost was first \$2,000 of the gate receipts with a fifty-fifty split thereafter. Admission was adults \$2.00 and children \$1.00. The Heart of America Shows were on the midway.

Not much has changed on the entertainment side of the Fair with Korkow rodeos bringing their rodeo stock for shows on August 3 and 4. Stock was held at the local sale barn and the board was responsible for transportation of the stock to and from the rodeo. The rodeo contractor also provided the organist and the clown and bullfighter. The same guarantee was listed in the contract and gate receipts showed \$3,552 received from tickets. Bids were also received from Hodson Brothers of Leoti, Kansas and Long Rodeo Company of Alden, Kansas. Jack Hunter continued his tenure with the fair to provide sound and his fee was now \$625.

The 4-H program had pre fair contests and judging began on Tuesday, August 1. Judges had a specific time to discuss the agriculture, foods and home living exhibits. Dress revue judging began at 2:00 and the 4-H dog show began at 3:00. At 4:00 the clothing judge gave reasons on the clothing exhibits. This was the era prior to interview judging. Wednesday started with the 4-H horse show, the event no longer was an open class show, and the bicycle rodeo was held in late afternoon. Junior leaders held a bake sale in the 4-H building. As usual the market livestock was judged during the day and the breeding show and showmanship contests were on Friday.

“Smoky Mouse”, a crossbred steer, earned the grand champion steer honors for Craig Talkington. Russell Berndt won reserve champion with a crossbred steer named “Red”.

Champion market hog was shown by Dan Harsh and Lonnie Moore received reserve. The show had 76 entries. Thirty-six entries vied for lamb honors and the show was won by Deborah Larington and Linda Boner had reserve. The champion sold for a record \$101 a pound. The new contest for swine pen of three went to the Moore Family.

Dress revue champions were Rosann Uerling, Beth Barger and Tamera Hoffman. Reserve honors went to Linda Winters, Peggy Klocke, and Joellyn Uerling. The singing groups winning the right to perform at the state fair were the Sew and So’s, Happy Helpers, and Rocketeers 4-H club

The Jaycee’s operated stock car races and the first was June 3 and the last one was during the fair.

1973

Fair dates were July 30 to August 4. Pre fair 4-H events began July 23 with the home economics judging contest, with the 4-H demonstrations contest held on July 25. A new event, meats judging contest was held on Friday, July 27. Prior to the fair the fair board held a rodeo on June 30 and July 1 with Jerry Livingston as the rodeo promotor. Contract conditions stated that the promotor would pay \$50. per day or two percent of the net profit, which ever was the greater amount.

Judging of 4-H clothing was done when entered at 8:00 A.M. at the McCook College. The dress revue was also judged that afternoon of Monday, July 30. A new high 4-H enrollment showed 595 members and 53 clubs in the county.

Fair judges were hosted to a breakfast on July 31 at 8:00 A.M., and all 4-H exhibits were judged upon arrival. Open class exhibits were entered and judged, except for flowers, and the 4-H Horse Show began at 2:00 with the timed events held in the evening. Other afternoon contests were woodworking identification, small motors identification and a casting contest. Another new contest was the Outdoor Cooking-Chef’s contest won by Mark Kunkee, Eric Stillwagon and Kirk Stillwagon, and a rocket contest won by Joe Vaughn and Kirk Blackman.

The evening entertainment was the 4-H horse show timed events, song contest and the dress revue. The Heart of America Shows carnival opened with a kiddie night. At the end of the fair they had grossed over 12 thousand dollars with \$2,475.52 returned to the fair.

A livestock judging contest started the August 1st events, followed by a 4-H Dog show at 2:00 won by Carrie Wesch, and a 4-H bicycle rodeo at 4:00 won by Mark Hayes and Kurt Proud. Exhibit halls were open from four until nine. Entertainment at the grandstand was singer David Houston.

Judging of livestock was held on Thursday and open class flowers were entered for judging that morning. The champion hog was shown by Michele Moore and Leila Hoyt had reserve champion. Tami Nicholson had the champion sheep named "Funny Face" and brother Wade showed the reserve champion. Craig Talkington was a repeat winner with his champion steer which later sold for \$.85 a pound and Russell Berndt again won the reserve championship.

Judy Lynn Show was the featured grandstand show. The Gazette edition for that day reported that it was one of the first Thursdays of the county fairs that it did not rain, and that a good crowd attended the grandstand.

Friday was dedicated to showmanship contests and the dairy and breeding livestock judging. Evening entertainment was provided by the Big Car Racing Association and featured sprint cars in seven events for a price of \$2,000 with a fifty-fifty split after the gate receipts of \$2,000.

The 4-H Sale was held the last morning of the fair at the West Sale Barn and stock car racers also competed on the track.

Other income was received by the fair board with rentals of buildings for \$3.00 a month or higher amounts dependent upon the size of the area rented. It was a great place to store boats.

1974

A young Tanya Tucker was the headliner at the fair on Wednesday, July 31 at 8:00 P.M. (This writer remembers watching her make her way to the stage from a camper type vehicle. Linda Taylor remembers standing in line to get her autograph.) Her contract cost \$3,000.00 and fifty percent of the take after the receipts reached that amount. The contract stated that payment was to be made to her legal representative because she was a teenager. A follow up letter was sent to Dale Thompson from her personal manager John Kelly, that he would not be able to be there and wanted the check made payable to Artist Talent Corporation and given to his son Pat who would be present. He also requested that arrangements be made to cash the check for him in case there was need for any money for expenses. It may be assumed that there was some miscommunication with the personal manager and Don Tucker, because the payment was made directly to Don Tucker with a receipt that stated, "Don Tucker received payment of \$3,000 from the Red Willow County Fair Board, for the Tonya Tucker show.

The Red Willow County Fair Board will not be held responsible for further payment to any other party.” Don Tucker signed the receipt of payment.

Pre fair 4-H events included home economics judging contest practice, meats judging contest and 4-H song contest on July 24. On Monday, July 29, all 4-H clothing exhibits were judged upon arrival at the fairgrounds agricultural complex. Dress revue judging was at 2:00 in the afternoon and all livestock was entered. That evening a free show was performed by C. Christo, Magician who had a contract for \$195 and he also requested that a platform of at least 15’ by 18’ be available that could be transferred into a stage. He also required that the platform be vacant for at least three hours prior to the show.

All open class and 4-H exhibit, not previously judged were judged upon arrival. An entry form was included in the fair premium book to allow exhibitors to have it completed before bringing exhibits to the fair. The Horse show began at noon and a woodworking identification contest was held at 2:00, followed by a small motor’s identification contest. The rocket contest was held in the livestock arena, followed by an Outdoor cooking contest. At 8:00 P.M. was the dress revue, Pioneer Farm Family Awards and the 4-H horse show timed events.

4-H events on Wednesday included all judging contests and the dog show. The Heart of America Shows were on the midway. All open class flowers were accepted on Thursday morning.

The Livestock judging and bicycle rodeo were the 4-H events. Paul Sughroue and Karen Ford won the bicycle rodeo. That evening was the Buckskin Jack Western Thrill Show. His contract was made for \$950.00.

Market livestock winners were Craig Talkington, champion and his brother Shane received reserve in the beef division. Leroy Hayes won the swine division and Mark Uerling was reserve. Kevin Fuller won the market lamb championship and Barb Ford was named reserve.

Breeding livestock and Dairy judging and showmanship contests were on the agenda, and the evening show featured the Ollie Anderson Daredevils. The final day started with the 4-H livestock sale at the West Sale Barn and exhibits were released in the morning. Car racing completed the fair entertainment.

A letter was sent to Ted Cory with a contract for 1974. Dale Thompson also stated that the board had voted to award a contract the Heart of America Shows for a three- year period beginning in 1975. Mr. and Mrs. Dale Thompson received the 4-H meritorious service award.

1975

Six days of fair from July 28 - August 2 provided a full range of activities and entertainment. There was no rodeo again on the schedule. Pre fair contests began on July 16 with the demonstration contest, followed on July 21 with the clothing judging at the college science building. The meats judging was on July 22 and the B.B. gun, archery and rocket contest were held at the fairground. This was the first year for the B.B. gun and archery events. That evening the song contest was held at the music building at the college. The Home Economics judging contest was held at the fairgrounds on Thursday, July 24.

The fair week opened on Monday, July 28 with all livestock and poultry entered, including open class. It was kiddie night at the carnival and Heart of America Shows was on the midway. According to their records the carnival stated it was very hot and dusty for the next two days, then okay, and rain occurred on Thursday causing an early shutdown, but then reopened and stayed open until 12:30. Local merchants sold tickets prior to the fair and sold 4,393 books of tickets. Gross receipts for the carnival were \$15,684.40 with the fair receiving \$3,810.14.

The second day of fair followed the previous year schedule with the dress revue and timed horse events in the evening. The Wednesday evening entertainment that started at 8:30 P.M. was the Stoney Edwards and Toni Ingraham country western show. Contracts paid Toni Ingraham \$1,200 and Stoney Edwards was paid \$2,250. The show had a crowd of 1200.

Livestock was judged on Thursday and the evening performers were Ben Smathers and the Stoney Mountain Cloggers, an eight-person unit from the Grand Ole Opry. Their price was \$1500.00. Winners of 4-H events included Phil Bamesberger, Joanne Bamesberger and Kathy Sughroue in horse show competition. Melanie Macfee showed the champion steer and Denise Garey had reserve champion. Other purple ribbon steers were shown by Lynda Hoyt, Dawn Lytle, Bill Roberts, John Coyle, Pam Garey, Scott Garey, Lanae Hoyt, Dawn Lytle, and Terri Propes.

Craig Talkington showed the champion swine and Leila Hoyt was reserve. There were forty lambs contending for the lamb honors and Tami Nicholson won the event.

The dog show contest was won by Audry Johnson, Leigh Ann Lyle, Ronnie Grafton and Roland Nicholson. Winners of the bicycle rodeo were David Phinney, Matt Sehnert, Kris Proud, Rodney Stewart, Julie Birch and Todd Doyle.

Figure "8" racing from the Artists company in Orlando, Florida was the entertainment on Friday night. It was known as a demolition derby and had two heats and one feature race with all contestants from the local area. Cost was \$1,500, with fifty percent of receipts after the \$1,500. A note on the contract stated that in case of a rain out this

contract shall apply in 1976 and further if this type of show is used in 1976 this contract shall be renewed.

Insurance coverage at the fairs was required for racing events and rodeo events, along with rain out insurance. The fair board had liability insurance, along with coverage of all the buildings. There was no information concerning construction of new buildings.

The final night of the fair concluded with the Denver midget racing provided by the Colorado Mini Stock Association. Cost of the contract was \$1,200 and \$400 in case of rain. Sound for all fair performances was again furnished by Jack Hunter for \$700.

Prior to the fair The McCook Chautauqua committee agreed to use the fairgrounds for the Chautauqua show from June 2 to June 5. (However, it is this writer's recollection that the show was held in Norris Park.) Harlow Daffer began his board membership.

1976

The rodeo returns!!! Rafter H Rodeo Livestock Company from Tahlequah, Oklahoma contracted to do the rodeo on July 20 and 21 for \$4,500. Trick riders from North Platte included Terry Heil, Cheri Yonker and Scott Farr for \$450. Yvonne Koinzan was the organist for two nights at a fee of \$100.

Pre fair activities included the home economics judging contest on June 18, a demo-talk day on June 28 and all the clothing exhibits were judged on July 12. On July 14 the meats judging contest was held, along with the archery and rocket contest. The song contest was held at the music building that evening. On Friday, July 16 the 4-H horse show was held except for the timed events. The fair opened with for kiddie carnival night on the 19th and all poultry, cattle, hogs and sheep had to be entered by 9:00 P.M.

All other exhibits were entered on Tuesday and the exhibit halls opened at 4:30. It was always an exciting time for the participants because they could find their ribbon placings. The bicycle rodeo started at 3:00 that afternoon. The first performance of the rodeo was that evening

The next day was the livestock judging. Craig Talkington had the grand champion steer and Michele Macfee was reserve. Don Neel won the lamb division and Shane Talkington was reserve. Winners of the swine division were Dan Harsh and Mark Hayes. Dairy winners were Sally Klein, Jean Meyers, Tami Nicholson, Michael Leibrandt and Jeff Nicholson. J.B. Helberg had the champion breeding sheep and Patti Fuller was reserve.

In the breeding beef contest Mike Schlegel won the other breeds, and Denise Garey and Scott Garey won the Hereford division. Livestock showmanship winners included Sally Klein, Todd Doyle, Shane Talkington, Craig Talkington, Wilford Sughroue, Don Neel, Leila Hoyt, Peggy Ruppert, Toby Corey, and Scott Garey. It was reported that it was ideal weather for a livestock show.

Thursday evening was the night for the horse show timed events and the dress revue, Horse show winners were Mary Jo Burton in halter, David DeVries, Craig Reiners, and Pam Gillen in pole bending. Barrell racing winners were Chris Proud, Craig Reiners, and Pam Gillen.

Other 4-H contest winners that year included: Delrae Thomas, Karen Miller, Barb Meyers, Dian Slatt, Margie Ayer and Becky Thomas in home economics judging, and Denise Garey, Karen Miller, Leigh Ann Lyle and Sherri Longmore in demo-talk. Livestock judging winners were Craig Talkington, Dawn Lytle, and Bobby Ruf.

Fashion show style committee chairs were Donna Carmichael and Marlene Foster. They prepared the backdrop and conducted the showing. Champions were Barb Sughroue and Linda Ayer, beginning; Michele Bower and Doris Carmichael, middle; and Linda Rogers and Deb Klein in the advanced division.

The Spectacular Auto Daredevils were the entertainment on Friday evening. Their contract cost \$2,000.00 plus 50 percent of the gate thereafter. In case their star Chuck Carothers could not perform, the contract stipulated that it would be \$500.00 less.

The 4-H livestock sale continued its tradition of being held on Saturday morning at the West Sale Barn. Exhibits were released and the Rocky Mountain Racing Association provided the midget car racing. Jack Hunter provided the sound again at a cost of \$135.00 a day.

Carnival proceeds netted over \$17,000 and the fair board received \$4,040.04 for its share of the receipts. Kiddie night took in \$5,426.50 and each of the other nights averaged over \$2,408. The only rain occurred on Wednesday evening and it cleared so the midway could be open, according to the carnival records.

The McCook Bronc Horse Club held a horse show on June 13 at the fairgrounds. There were no other activities recorded for that year.

1977

Fair dates were July 25-30 for this year, several pre fair letters and orders were made from the Extension and fair board offices. Superintendents and judges were contacted and the potential exhibitors for the merchants building also had correspondence. Layout and booth assignments were made. George Rainbolt was added to the board to replace Dale Thompson at the end of the year.

Entertainers also had communication. Most entertainers were booked through an agency, but Clay Shepherd and Sally Flynn made the contact directly in handwritten letters to the fair board secretary, Dale Thompson. Clay 's letter stated, "Enclosed

please find a 30 second radio spot, an eight-track tape of our latest album and 10 '8 by 10' photos for our publicity use. In order to fill you in on our activities this year, we will be performing at the Sparks Nugget Casino in Reno, Nevada, with Red Skelton July 14th-27th and will be performing at over 30 fairs and rodeos this summer including the Oregon State Fair and the California State Fair. We look forward to being with you July 29th." It was signed, "Our best, Clay and Sally". The pictures are still in the files.

Some specialty publicity items were ordered including a sticker that displayed "We're a 4-H Family, Red Willow Co. Fair, McCook, Nebraska July 25-30". Also, 300 windshield green stickers were ordered for livestock exhibitors to use at the north gate. Ten thousand green placemats were purchased that were provided to local restaurants that had the fair scheduled imprinted.

Fair judges were Keith Gilster, John Lambert, Harlon Luttrell, Phil Grabowski, Robert Einspahr, Dick Shoemaker, Mrs. Marilyn Olney, Mrs. Sandra Schmoker, Larene Bantam, Mrs. Betty Garey, Mrs. Deb Abshier, Lynette Brown and Mrs. Ron Vontz.

4-H contests were: demo talk, July 1; meat identification, July 18; livestock judging contest, July 27, during the fair; and clothing and knitting exhibits were judged at the McCook Community College on Friday, July 22. The public style revue was held on Thursday evening in front of the grandstand. The rules stated that girls will not receive style revue money or ribbons unless they are in the style revue on July 28. The song contest was held at the college music room on July 21. A new entry was a thought exhibit that had specific size regulations.

Many volunteers were needed when 475 club members and 43 4-H clubs were involved in the fair. The following is a list of superintendents and clerks:

Clothing Department

Mrs. Elmer Roedel, superintendent, Mrs. Loyall Nicholson, Mrs. Wayne Ely, Mrs. Richard Dack, Mrs. Dale Hofman, Mrs. Don Burton, Mrs. Stanley Quigley and Mrs. Don Klein

Style Revue

Mrs. Donna Carmichael and Mrs. Marlene Foster

Foods Department

Mrs. Clifford Mihm, Mrs. Johnnie Nicholson, Mrs. Gordon Birch, Mrs. Ernest Hackenkamp, Mrs. Ardythe Slatt and Mrs. Doug Taylor

Home Living Department

Mrs. Albert Hayes, Mrs. Dennis Wuedtke and Mrs. Larry Siegfried

Ag Department

Mr. Merwin Grafton, Mr. Albert Hayes, Mrs. Merwin Grafton, Mrs. Don Kisker and Mrs. Earle Meyers

Miscellaneous Projects

Mrs. Roland Reed, Mrs. Wally Derr and Mrs. Leonard Sitzman

Poultry Department

Norman Leibrandt and Mrs. Herman Leibrandt

Livestock Department

Richard Neel, Cal Siegfried, Albert Hayes, Lloyd Helberg, Hazel Bobimeyer, Darlene Waterman, Mrs. Richard Neel, Robert Haag and Fred Devries. Grounds superintendent for the horse show was Ralph Goltl. Mrs. Robert Haag was the clerk and Dennis Youngs was the horse show announcer.

There may have been a problem with using the horse arena and the 4-H horse clubs were sent a notice that a practice schedule for use of the arena must be presented to the fair board prior to use. The notice stated that the gates are locked and arrangements for use of grounds can be made to have them unlocked. A notice was sent to the board that poultry exhibits would be checked to determine their freedom from Pullorum-Typhoid disease in compliance with the Nebraska Poultry Disease Act.

Kiddie night at the rodeo was Monday, July 25. Advanced prices for the rodeo, races, and the stage show were \$1.00 for children 5-12 and \$2.50 for adults.

No contract was found for the rodeo producer, but there was a contract to lease 13 roping steers for four days from the Hayes Center Rodeo Association for \$255.00. Pam Moser was hired as the organist and Jack Hunter again provided the sound. The RCA rodeo was held on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Contracts were made with the Flying I Ranch, Hoss Inman and Bernia Johnson, for the rodeo for \$2,000.00. Barrel racing was approved by the Girls' Rodeo Association as a separate event. Tom Kiplinger headed up the rodeo committee. A contract for rain insurance was made for the evenings of July 26, 27, and 29 to cover the rodeo and derby in the amount of \$9,000. The policy cost was \$714.

It was 4-H night with the archery, and rocket contests and style show at the grandstand. Fashion show winners were Michele Bower and Margie Ayer, grand and reserve in the advanced division; Diane Slatt and Traci Taylor, grand and reserve in the middle division; and Lori Dack and Pam Garey, grand and reserve in the beginning group

There was no mention of timed horse show events. Livestock winners included: Mike Macfee, champion beef, Dick Koetter, reserve; Shane Talkington, champion swine, Todd Corey, reserve; Shane Talkington, champion sheep, and Deon Leitner, reserve.

Breeding show winners were Michele Moore and Denise Garey for breeding beef and Tami Nicholson and Michael Leibrandt won the dairy show. Showmanship champions were Craig Talkington, Sally Klein, Shane Talkington, Carrie Corey and Todd Doyle.

There were some traditions concerning winning the livestock beef champion. After every livestock show there was a traditional water fight and parents often ignored the display, knowing that it had been a long and stressful time for the 4-Hers. The Driftwood Feeders 4-H Club relished the championships and the family of the winner was expected to host a cookout to celebrate, the weekend after the fair.

On Friday the evening production was the Clay Hart and Sally Flynn Show. They were performers on the Lawrence Welk Show. The Saturday night main event was stock car racing under the auspices of the Northwest Kansas Racing Association. They also held races in McCook on May 14, June 11, and July 9.

Receipts from the carnival were again above \$4,000 with the midway open for six nights. They listed 51 concessions on the midway. Tom Kiplinger was a new board member and his legacy with the fairgrounds was started. George Rainbolt also began his tenure that lasted until 1983.

1978

The fair schedule was following the previous year with pre fair events beginning June 23 for the home economics judging contest. Meats judging and the B.B. gun contest were held July 12, followed by the song contest on July 13, Demo-talk on the 14th and clothing judging on July 21. Winners of many of these contests were then eligible for state fair competition.

July 24-29 were the actual fair days and the 4-H horse show was held on Monday with the kiddie carnival night beginning at 5:00 and the merchants building was opened.

Tuesday included all exhibit judging, including open class, bicycle rode, and the RCA rodeo. A new event in open class was the Nebraska State Fair Special Award for Best in County Needlework contest. Each county was eligible to submit and their winner of their local county fair. Poultry exhibits were inspected by the inspector from the Department of Agriculture and the inspector reported that this was "a nice clean show". A total of three hundred and forty-five 4-H members from thirty clubs were exhibitors

Fair judges were Larry White, Glenn Knapple, Harlan Luttrell, Phil Grabouski, Robert Einspahr, Dick Shoemaker, Lynette Brown, Larene Bantam, Betty Garey, Liana Rich, Deb Abshier, Genevieve Petersen, Marlene Davidson, Shirley Vontz, Marilyn Olney, Jan Lambert, Robert Mead, Jerda Garey, Jeanette Reed and LeAvis Rutt. New additions to the superintendent list were Mrs. Gene Anderson in home environment, Elmer Kuntz as

horse show announcer, David Moore in livestock, Beth Siegfried in General Projects, and Dale Rowledder and Mrs. Ron Daniels. The cat show was a new addition to the entries and the dog show continued to grow in popularity. There were 388 4-H exhibitors from 30 clubs.

Iris Thompson was named the Executive Secretary of the fair, following in her husband's footsteps as fair secretary, and she not only did the bookkeeping, but also sent out all correspondence. Dale Thompson had resigned from the board after his election as a county commissioner. One of the letters was to the exhibitors of the merchant's building. She announced that exhibits could be set up on Sunday, and that the building would be open on Monday at 5:30. Exhibitors will have their own parking areas and will use the south gate and have a sticker for identification. The parking sticker can be picked up at the fair office.

The RCA rodeo had stock again furnished by Flying I and B-J Rodeo from Cleburne, Texas. Rodeo costs included: \$5,500. contractor; \$1,000, prize money; \$100, barrel racing; \$200 team roping; \$200, Hayes County Roping Club for use of steers; \$90, ambulance; \$367.00, rodeo committee workers. Jack Hunter provided the sound at a cost for the fair of \$970. He had become a very familiar face each year. Patty Lemon sent a thank you note for the bracelet, tiara, belt buckle and queen's sash when named the rodeo queen.

A new chain link fence was installed behind the grandstand to separate it from the midway at a cost of \$1505.48. The fair board received a \$1,000 grant from Ak-Sar-Ben for improvements. The board also received \$1,845.21 from the Nebraska State Racing Commission, which represented 1/93 of the net funds remaining in the hands of the commission after payment of expenses incurred during the 1978 Nebraska Horse Racing Season. This money, according to Statute is to be used solely to promote the fair or county 4-H club show.

The 4-H livestock show was held on Thursday. Winners included: Michelle Macfee, champion beef, Shelly Leibrandt, reserve beef, Leila Hoyt, champion swine, Leah Hoyt reserve, and Denise Garey, reserve champion lamb. Cyndi Tenell won the cat show and Patty Ruppert was reserve. Chris Klein had the champion dairy cow named "Dotti". This was "Dotti's" seventh championship, as she had been shown by sister Sally Klein in previous years. The bicycle rodeo contest winners were Mike Macfee and Patrick Kelly.

Leah Hoyt sent a thank you note to the board for buying her swine at the county fair sale. That evening was the traditional 4-H night for archery, rocket and dress revue.

A free grandstand performance on Friday evening featured Sam West, a vocal musical performance by Debbie Stringer, an instrumental musical performance by the Nashville Rebels and the master of ceremonies was Jerry Venable. Cost of the show was \$1,500.00. The contract was signed by William D. Koetter, president of the board and

George Rainbolt, fair board secretary. Pioneer Airways asked to participate by giving away two round trip tickets at the drawing on the appreciation night. There were several thank you notes received by the board from patrons who appreciated the free entertainment.

Car racing was again on the agenda for the last night of the fair. The North West Kansas Racing Association placed the fair on its schedule. They also raced in McCook on May 20 and June 3. The association operated the races, guaranteed 20 cars, and received sixty percent of the receipts after expenses. Lorie Koetter sent a thank you note for a necklace and a corsage received as the trophy girl.

Several new board members were named. They included Albert Hayes, Robert Haag and Kenneth Kircher.

The midway was active again with the Heart of America Shows. There were six nights of activity and the weather was hot, but it threatened rain on Wednesday evening. However, the carnival did not close until midnight. Total gross was \$17,282.73 and the fair board collected almost \$4,000 for its share.

1979

July 23-28 were the fair days and the events and calendar was almost a repeat of the previous year. Advance sale tickets were \$3.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children. Advance sale tickets were available at Bartley Grocery, Blume Supermarket in Indianola, Danbury Oil, McCook Chamber of Commerce, and the fair office. The KFNF production tickets were free from merchants but cost \$5.00 at the door that evening. Jack Hunter continued his trip from Ardmore, South Dakota to furnish sound. This year's contract was for \$970.00.

The RCA rodeo was presented on July 24 and 25 with the B Bar J rodeo stock from Cleburne, Texas for the third year in a row. Professional cowboys traveled from Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas, Colorado, Montana, Arizona, North Dakota, Wyoming, South Dakota and Nebraska to participate. Brenda Nokes was the only local cowgirl competing in the Girls Rodeo Association approved barrel race. Entry fees for events were set by the sanctioned associations and participants were required to be members of those associations. Frank McIlvane was the rodeo clown. A publicity piece furnished by the rodeo contractors and used prior to the fair stated, "Last year's calf roping winner at the Red Willow County Fair went on to become the P.R.C.A. rookie of the year. Dee Pickett of Caldwell, Idaho turned down an offer from the Dallas Cowboys team to enter Pro-rodeo, earning over \$30,000 last year and is currently being wooed by the Seattle Seahawks of the NFL to return to football." The rodeo contract was ten percent higher than the previous year. The contractor said that 1978 was a good year for him with 27

head of bucking stock qualifying for the Texas finals, sixteen head for the national finals and that his horse, 'Sippin Velvet" won the bareback horse of the year. A calf dressing contest was added to the rodeo entertainment.

Several new faces were among the fair judges. Dale Luther, Don Siffring, Ed Kinsman, Kathy Stahlecker, Erna Todd, Nancy McBride, Janet Mackintosh, Sue Fortner and Sally Jo Ross were additions. Over \$1,100 was paid for the judges' service.

Livestock winners were Leah Hoyt champion beef, Richard Klein, champion sheep and Denise Garey, reserve, and Shane Talkington won the swine show with brother Craig named reserve. Leah Hoyt received \$101.00 a pound for her 1245-pound animal. There were 30 4-H clubs and 147 exhibitors. A new 4-H building increased the display area and a conference work room was added.

The Fashion revue was held on Thursday evening with 102 girls and one boy participating. A new 4-H project was Clothes for Young Men. State fair winners were Connie Hinz and Denise Garey. There was a new 4-H building and Community building to make the fairgrounds a great place to exhibit.

Jacky Ward headed the KNFN appreciation show at the grandstand on Friday evening and the Northwest Kansas Racing Association sponsored the stock car races. Two other races were held earlier in the summer.

The midway attraction continued with the Heart of America shows. It rained the first two evenings, but all events were able to continue. The receipts were over \$19,000 with \$5,587.00 of tickets sold in advance sales. The fair received \$4,367.70 for its share of receipts.

Other fairgrounds income for the year was received from storage space rent, display space during the fair and the Shrine Circus. A payment of \$20,000 was made on the new buildings.

1980

County fair dates were July 21 through July 26. The schedule was very similar to the previous year. A cat show started the Tuesday shows, followed by Bicycle rodeo and the bake sale.

Rodeo stock cost over \$5,000 with a \$500 purse. There were no records to determine if the same contractor was providing the stock. Jack Hunter continued to provide the sound and his cost had escalated to \$1,500.

The traditional schedule was followed for the 4-H events. Friday night's entertainment was the KFNF Proud Country Show, featuring George Hamilton IV. Saturday night

ended with stock car racing. The Heart of America Shows carnival receipts totaled over twenty thousand dollars, with the fair receiving almost forty-five hundred. The highest gross night, other than the kiddie night with advance sale tickets was the night of the KFNF show. The weather was hot, but agreeable and no rain fell during the week.

The racing commission continued to provide some income to the fair. Storage rent and income gained from fair displays were other assistance for the operation.

1981

The only records available to review were the accounting records. The approximate dates were July 21-26 with a similar schedule as previous years. There was a cost for sound for \$1500. The FFA was paid for rodeo set up, rodeo programs were purchased and there were expenses for a rodeo queen. Rodeo receipts were \$2,497.00, and second night on July 23, the receipts were \$4,325.75. The carnival brought in over \$5,000.00. Ak-Sar-Ben provided \$2,000 for improvements. There was a cost for the demolition derby insurance.

St. Patrick's Church had its first food booth. Bruce Swanson was added to the fair board membership. Bruce Swanson was a new board member.

1982

There were changes for this fair which was held July 19-24. The usual pre fair contests were held, and July 8 was a major day for the meats judging, B.B. gun contest, archery contest and the song contest. On the 9th the demo-talk event was held at the fairground meeting room. Judging of clothing was still being held at McCook Community College. The horse show had moved to Saturday. Judging of leather, photography, posters, rockets, Let's create, Do You Own Thing, ceramics, candy and cake decorating was held at the south end of the 4-H building on Monday evening.

Tuesday, the 20th was on the same schedule as previous years, and that evening was the first night of the NSRA rodeo, instead of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys sanctioned event. The Hudson Rodeo Company furnished the stock for \$4,200 with a \$500 purse attached. Jack Hunter still provided the sound and his fee was now \$1,500 There was a rodeo queen contest. Receipts the first night were \$2,062 and \$2,732 the second performance. The McCook FFA were paid for set up of rodeo.

Exhibits at the merchants building were over twenty-five hundred dollars, and other income during the year was from rental of buildings for storage. A gift from the Hayes

family was used for construction of a new show area with a metal roof, was now called the "Big Top".

New judges included: Terry Shrick, livestock; Chuck Schroeder, horse; Mary Planansky, cat; and Marian Harden, and Syndoma Hayes, dog. Improvements to the fair included the Big Top livestock show arena, grandstand bleachers painting, and an improved wash rack. Frances Kasl was the open class superintendent.

A new addition to the livestock exhibits was the pen of three contest. Market lambs and swine were judged in the morning and the Pen of three was held at 1:00 with market beef following. That evening was the traditional 4-H night with the rocket contest and style revue. It was listed to be held at the stadium. A new moveable stage was available for events. Junior Leaders took major leadership responsibilities at this fair for many of the contests. The county employed Dallas Talkington and Jerda Garey to step in and organize the 4-H contests as the former extension agents had resigned. The 4-H junior leaders spearheaded the grandstand painting and built a photo backdrop for the livestock area. Scott Garey had the champion steer and Pam Garey was reserve. Pam won the showmanship contest. Scott also showed the champion lamb.

The breeding show and showmanship contests were on Friday with stocker feeders making their first appearance in competition. The KFNF Proud Country Western Show was held that evening.

The Demolition Derby on Saturday evening was a big success, taking in over eleven thousand dollars. Cal Siegfried was the announcer. Derby winners were Wendell Smith, Randy Bass, Lee Guthrie and Rod Spencer.

1983

Dates for the fair were July 18-23 with pre-fair events on June 24, July 7, 8 and 15, following the same schedule as in previous years. There was no carnival available on Tuesday evening, but the Dean Short Marionettes Show had afternoon and evening performances at a cost of \$900 for the two days. There was a tractor pull on both Tuesday and Wednesday evening in place of the previous rodeo schedule. One night there was a parachute jump, but the date was not available. The jumpers were paid \$300.

Premiums paid out for the fair totaled \$5,324.40 and the costs for judges was \$1,518. The KFFN Proud Country Western Show featuring Hank Thompson was held on Friday, July 22. The Demolition Derby ended the week. Winners were Jett Fromhotz, Larry Bass, Mark Jumps, Charlie Kuhlman, Alan Rose and Steve Peres. Cal Siegfried was the announcer. He recalled that this was the scariest times he had in his life. Two cars

jumped the track and rammed into a bleacher. A baby stroller was sitting by the bleacher and he thought the worst had happened. However, the child was being held at that time. To his knowledge that was the last time the derby was held at the fair.

Jack Hunter made another trip from South Dakota to provide the sound system at a cost of \$1500. The volunteer fireman received 20 percent of the demolition derby receipts for \$581.

Advertising for the fair was done was McCook Daily Gazette, KOMC-TV, NTV, KFNF, Early Bird, and KRVN.

Major improvements occurred on the grounds, in the amount of \$15,487.76. This may have been the year the Community Building was built. The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben provided \$1,000.

Grandstand receipts were \$5,229 for the Demolition Derby and the county received \$4271.15 from storage, displays and other events. The carnival brought in \$4,704.

1984

County fair time was July 23-28. After a year of tractor pulling and demolition derby the board brought back a rodeo. Pre-fair events included a home economics judging contest on June 29, the demo-talk on July 13, and the BB gun contest and archery contest on July 17. The clothing was judged in Tipton Hall at the college on July 20.

The 4-H horse show as in the 4-H area on west 10th street and the livestock entries were entered that evening. All kiddie carnival night tickets had to be purchased before 5:00 P.M. from the downtown merchants. Miscellaneous 4-H exhibits were also judged on Monday evening.

A new event was the Clowning Contest at 6:00 on the Youth in Action Stage, the portable stage that was utilized in front of the grandstand and on the area in front of the office and community building. The F.M. Sport Parachute club was paid \$320.00 for their jumps. The sound trailer was furnished by Lloyd Lantz.

The rodeo was a Nebraska State Rodeo Association sanctioned event. It was also held on Wednesday evening. The calf dressing contest was won by Mark Hayes, and Denise Garey and Cal Siegfried tied for second.

Thursday was again the entering and judging of the open class flowers and the livestock judging with market lambs and swine in the morning and Pen of Three and Market Beef in the afternoon. The Dean Short Marionettes Show performed at 7, 8:30 and 9:30 on the grounds both Thursday and Friday. The fashion revue and song contest were held in front of the grandstand Thursday evening. The KFNF Proud County Western Show

starred Leroy VanDyke on Friday evening, following the showmanship contests, goat show, breeding sheep and beef and dairy shows.

Saturday morning the livestock was moved to the West Sale Barn for the sale. That evening the midget car races were held. The carnival was on the grounds Tuesday-Saturday. Profits from the carnival were \$4,958. Rodeo receipts were \$5,864 and the race grossed \$1,315.

Improvements for the fairgrounds included upgrading grandstand seats for \$4,552, fencing for \$650, scale rack for \$450.00 and upgrade of wiring for \$3,550. Police patrol cost \$1,325 and the ambulance cost was \$330. Another payment of \$2,000 was made for the Big Top. \$5,183 was paid in 4-H premiums and \$636.15 was spent for open class.

Many of the same judges were employed and new faces included Barbara Ogden, Patti Taft, Richard Driml, John Lambert, Yule Dorwart, Harlan Luttrell, Robert Engle, Barbara Anderson, Judy Malone, Lynnel Wood, Sandra Southard, Lynette Brown, Kathy Stahlecker, Lynnell Wood, Phyllis Horniek, Craig Talkington, Connie McClatchey, Susan Ladenberger and Barbara Hall.

For several years the Shrine Circus utilized the fairgrounds for their production. The board was paid \$245 for a rental fee. Cal Siegfried was named a new board member.

1985

There was sketchy information available concerning this year. In reviewing ledgers, the dates may have been July 23-29. A rodeo and races were held, along with a carnival. Hudson rodeo company provided the rodeo with a cost of \$5,100 and added purse of \$350.

The first night of the rodeo had receipts of \$1,847 and the second night was \$2,104. The race receipts totaled over \$650, and carnival netted \$4,988. The puppet show was again on the grounds, and the cost was \$975.

Improvements consisted of paint, panels, and materials in the 4-H building and wiring in the beef barns. Patrol costs for the fair were \$1,190.

1986

There was no information available about this fair. Don Klein was named a member of the fair board in August.

1987

The fair was held July 20-24, a day shorter than in the past. A 4-H schedule was not available, but it can be assumed that pre fair contests were scheduled. Discount ticket books were available from downtown merchants, 9 tickets for \$3.00. There were the only tickets that could be used the first night of the fair on Monday, July 20. The carnival opened at 5:00, the merchants building opened at 5:30 and poultry could be entered from 6:00 to 9:00. Free Jackpot Roping was the evening entertainment.

All open class exhibits, except flowers were entered on Tuesday morning. A free ventriloquist show was presented at three times during the evening by Dave Gallington. The grandstand show was a gospel show by "THE SOUND".

Wednesday featured the free ventriloquist show and the grandstand featured the Ark Valley Boys. The fair no longer held the style show and song contest on Thursday evening, but tractor pull, organized by the Nebraska Bush Pullers, was the entertainment. The ventriloquist show was again on the grounds in front of the community building. It can be assumed that the 4-H livestock show was held as in previous years, and that flowers were entered on Thursday morning.

Friday evening featured the Mid-Nebraska Racing Association of Lexington, Nebraska organizing the car races. Exhibits were released after 9:00 P.M.

1988

The only records on file were insurance records. A letter from Haas-Wilkerson-Wohlberg stated that all entertainers should provide the Fair Association with Certificates of Insurance showing limits of at least \$1,000,000. The certificate should name Red Willow County Fair as an additional insured. It is not the intent of your fair policy to cover exposures for the individual entertainers.

Newspaper articles from the McCook Daily Gazette provided several articles. An editorial written by Jack Rogers, June 28, 1988, stated that "This is important year for the R W County Fair". He further stated, " As a matter of fact, it's a pivotal year—a year that will either make or break the fair; a year that will decided if a county fair, as we have known it, will be held in 1989. As a result, members of the fair board, who, by the way, are all volunteers, have gone all out to offer the best show possible." The entertainment that he mentioned included stock car races the opening night, July 22, Tractor Pull on July 23, and the Forester Sisters on July 24. The Olie Anderson 4x4 daredevil show on July 25 was the next entertainment and the fair ends with a rodeo on July 26, and 27.

His article went on to state, :The Red Willow County Fair receives no local tax support and is one of the few county fairs in the state in this situation.”

The Fair board offered a VIP pass for \$10.00 per person if purchased by July 15. Service clubs also sold the buttons for a ten percent bonus on the sales.

Results from the 4-H demonstration contest included Danny Rayer and Justin Carper winners to represent Red Willow County at the state fair. Other trophy winners were Janet Rayer, Marla Rayer, and Jennifer Page. Winners of the BB Gun contest were Amy Korb, Lance Handley, and Heath Bortner. Karl Siebuhr was the trophy winner in the archery division. Chris Keen won the intermediate archery division and Kevin Reiners won the junior division.

The livestock winners were Nan Dicke with her 1,285-pound Maine-Anjou steer. This was the third year that she had won the championship. Winner of the swine division was Danny Wolfe. He also won the trophy in livestock judging. Teresa Tucker won the market lamb division and had reserve in the market heifer competition.

The “Balloon Man”, Bob Rupert presented his show on the grounds each day. The pedal pull competition was held on Monday afternoon. The Forester Sisters had been selected 1986’s Top Vocal Group by the Academy of Country Music and their performance was on Sunday evening.

Bull fighting competition was the highlight of the rodeo. Troy Johnson of Hatch, New Mexico, was the grand prize winner of the Wrangler Bull-Fighting Championship. He won the \$1,000.00 check. Local rodeo winners included Scott Clements of Imperial who placed fifth in calf roping, and fourth in steer wrestling. Denny Ott of Palisade tied for fourth in saddle bronc riding, and Del Dack was third and Shane Talkington sixth in steer wrestling. The Scarlet Ribbons mounted drill team performed at the rodeo prior to the events. There was also a barbecue for rodeo ticket holders.

The 4-H auction was held on Thursday, sponsored by the McCook Area of Chamber of Commerce Ag Task Force. The committee included Don Moore, Tom Tirrill, Rich Mustion and Mike Messersmith. The task force had sponsored the sale since 1960. It cost \$100.00 to be an active supporter of 4-H. The sale format included an auction with the bidder having the option to keep the animal or resell. Part of the sale process involved a commercial resale after the 4-H auction. The auction sold 70 head of market beef, 67 swine and 22 lambs for \$90,569.

Jack Rogers wrote another editorial on August 10, following the fair. This article will be quoted in its entirety, as county fairs seem to face these situations often.

Jack Rogers wrote, “An ad in a recent issue of the McCook Daily Gazette proclaiming, ‘We Did, we did,’ pretty well explains what happened at the Red Willow County Fair this year.

As you recall, this was a pivotal year for the fair---one that would either make or break the fair; a year that would have decided if there would be future Red Willow County Fairs.

Things went very well for the fair with the crowd the largest in years, surpassing the expectations of the fair board.

Attendance was estimated at 20,000 to 25,000 for the six-day event and some members of the fair board said they couldn't remember any larger crowds in past years.

There are a lot of people who deserve credit for the success, starting with the fair board, a group of volunteers who were dedicated to putting on a successful event.

The entertainment was just one aspect of the fair---a very important one, of course==but participation by the hundreds of 4-H'ers and adults who had entries in the various shows from livestock to vegetables to fashions also contributed greatly.

Then there are the merchants and service clubs who not only participated in the livestock sale but helped by selling the VIP Pass Buttons.

And last, but certainly not least, was the most important group---those who supported the fair with their presence at the entertainment and 4-H events.

There are two major reasons fairs are held --- education and amusement. There is no other event that combines competition, education, entertainment, and recreation.

The emphasis on family activity and entertainment, the opportunity to earn personal recognition, the chance to learn and the chance to play are all factors that make fairs unique.

Thanks to the efforts and support of area residents, the Red Willow County fair will continue.”

The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben continued their \$1,000 grant for fairgrounds improvements. It was earmarked for refurbishing of the grandstand. Former board member, Dale Thompson was elected first vice president of the Nebraska State Board of Agriculture.

1989

Red Willow County Fair Time was July 21-25, with the fair held over a weekend. The Heart of America Shows Carnival was again on the midway and Discount Merchants tickets were good only for Friday, July 21. However, all other days, an All-You-Can-Ride pass could be purchased for \$7.00 that was good for every day from 6:00P.M. until 11:00 P.M.

The fair opened on Friday with open class exhibits and 4-H entered and judged. The Dean Short Marionettes, free show on the grounds, appeared again. That evening was a sprint, mini-sprint, and street stock car race.

On Saturday, a Lil' Red Draggin' Mini-Tractor Pullers contest for ages 4-9 was held from 4:00 to 6:00 on the Ag complex parking lot. At 7:30 the Nebraska Bush Pullers held a tractor pull in front of the grandstand.

Sunday was the performance from Roy Clark Show at 8:00 at the grandstand. The Marionettes also performed on the grounds. Tickets were priced from 8 dollars to 15 dollars.

4-H exhibitors held their livestock show at 2:00 on Sunday. The merchants building and other exhibit buildings were also opened at this time. Grand champion beef was shown by Wadlon Hilker. Nan Dicke was reserve champion. Chase Beeby received the grand champion lamb honors and reserve was Bryan Hauxwell. Kelsey Sellers had the champion swine and the reserve champion was shown by Danny Wolfe.

A PRCA rodeo and professional clown bullfight was held on Monday and Tuesday evening, proceeded by a drill team exhibition featuring the Scarlett Ribbons from Bartley, the Plum Creekers from Lexington and the Velvet Spurs from North Platte.

The McCook Daily Gazette, on 7/26/89 reported that more than 230 participants from the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association split more than \$10,000 in prizes at the two rodeos. Winners and their scores or times were team roping-Bret Trenary and Rich Skelton, 6.3 seconds; steer wrestling-Mark Owen, 3.2 seconds; calf roping-Billy Gallino, 9.9 seconds; bull fighting-Brian Rice, 86; saddle broncs-Derek Clark,79; barebacks-John Mondorf. 75; and barrel racing-Deb Thompson,15.64 seconds. Following the rodeo, fair manager Mary Lee Corey said in a McCook Daily Gazette report that the attendance at the Roy Clark show was disappointing, but the crowds at the rodeos both nights were "super". An ad in the Gazette from Gary's Country Peddler store advertised a free rodeo ticket when you purchase a pair of Wrangler jeans.

The livestock sale was held on July 26 at the North Sale Barn, a change from past years. The Knights of AkSarBen presented the board with a \$500. check for fair improvements.

The Fair Board conducted a survey concerning what entertainer residents would like to see perform at the 1990 Red Willow County fair.

The Nineties

1990

County fair dates were July 20-24 with the theme, "Come and Celebrate". Entertainers for the grandstand show on Saturday night were T.G. Sheppard and Janie Fricke. Activities began on Friday, July 20, with entries and carnival night for the discount tickets purchased from downtown merchants. Ticket prices remained the same at nine rides for \$3.00.

Olie Anderson and his 4 x 4 Auto-Truck Show was the grandstand feature for Friday evening. The Gary Roberts Magic Show was the free show on the grounds for the first three days of the fair.

Open class flowers, poultry, rabbits, and pigeons were entered on Saturday before noon and the open class exhibits were now in the community building. The building opened when the flower judging was completed. The Lil' Red Draggin' Mini-Tractor Pullers contest for ages four to nine was held at the ag complex parking lot at 4:00. The carnival opened at 6:00. The magic show and the country western show completed the day.

Sunday's activities began at 1:30 with the Draft Horse and Mule Obstacle competition in front of the grandstand. The Merchants building opened at 2:00, followed by the open class building at 2:30. The poultry building opened at 4:30 and the carnival opened at 5:00. The magic show was still performing three shows on the grounds and the Scarlett Ribbons Horse Drill Team Exhibition began at 7:00 in front of the grandstand, followed by a Draft Horse and Mule Parade. The PRCA Rodeo began at 8:00 with professional rodeo clown, One-Arm Bandit, and the Wrangler Bull Fight.

There was no 4-H schedule available, but it could be assumed that livestock judging was held on Sunday as in the previous year. The champion steer was shown by Jason Timmerman and Cody Siegfried had reserve champion. Russ Barger showed the grand champion market heifer. Champion market swine was shown by Dustin Winters and Sadi Quigley had reserve. Wadlon Hilker won the lamb show and Nathen Lietzan had reserve.

Other 4-H winners were Stacey Barger in dress revue and Jody Esteriach was reserve champion. Stacey Barger and Amy Bortner won the speech contest and Heath Bortner and Darren Pollman were Demo-talk contest purple ribbons.

Ticket holders for the rodeo could attend a Free Chuck Wagon Barbeque at 6:00 on Monday evening. Kelly Heywood and the White Line Kings performed during the event.

Tuesday was the last active day on the fairgrounds and a pancake feed was held prior to the evening performance for ticket holders. The grandstand show featured a talent show which started at 6:30. This was followed by a free dance at 8:30 to 11:30 P.M. featuring Snapshot from Kearney and was held in the 4-H building.

The 4-H livestock sale was held at the 4-H Show arena at the fairgrounds at 9:00. This was the first time for the event on the fairgrounds. An appreciation lunch for 4-Her's and their parents was held at Real's Bar and Grill. It had become a fair tradition that after the livestock show on the day of the show, that many parents of the 4-Her's would head as a group to Real's to socialize and get acquainted. Little League baseball was still active during this week and some parents had to leave to get their boys to the ballpark. The restaurant appreciated the extra business during the fair and then offered the free lunch.

Hillcrest Nursing Home now had its own entry code so that residents could exhibit under that code and the premium money could be sent in one check to Hillcrest.

A special tribute was made in the County Fair Premium Book with congratulations to Larry Leibrandt as one of two representatives from the state of Nebraska to the National PRCA Association. Also, congratulations were given to Tammy Barber, Bartley and Brenda Moreau, McCook for receiving the 1990 Ted Cory Scholarships.

Mr. Cory had contracted with the board for over 30 years to bring the Heart of America Shows carnival to the fair. He and his wife became good friends with the fair board members. (This writer remembers painting a picture of the midway to present to Mrs. Cory as a gift from the Thompson family.) She continued in the business and her carnival merged with others and were on the state fair circuit. (This writer remembers knocking on her bus door at the state fair and having a visit with her in her later years.) She loved her business and her employees.

1991

"Make Some Lasting Memories at the Red Willow County Fair" was the theme for 1991. The fair was again held over a weekend with a very similar schedule as in the past three years. Carnival night was the first evening, followed by a free "Magic Unlimited" show on the grounds. Moto-cross racing was the first night grandstand show. The mini-tractor pullers contest was on Saturday afternoon, followed by the free magic show. Saturday night featured a barbeque, pig tail and hog calling contest, and a feature show by Atlantic Recording Start, Neal McCoy.

The Draft Horse and Mule Obstacle course competition was in front of the grandstand on Sunday afternoon. The magic show was on the ground in the evening and the

Scarlett Ribbons Horse Drill Team performed prior to the PRCA Rodeo. Rodeo entertainment was Tommy Lucia, Jr. Another rodeo was held on Monday evening and rodeo ticket holders attended a free Chuck Wagon Barbeque featuring the "Calhoun Family" prior to the rodeo.

Exhibits were released from two to four on Tuesday. There were no special events schedule, except for the evening carnival, and the merchants building was open.

The 4-H sale was held at the 4-H Show Arena on Wednesday morning at 9:00. All premiums for open class exhibits were paid at the time of release. Premiums under \$2.00 were paid in cash, others by checks that were to be cashed within 60 days or they would be voided. Any exhibits that were not picked up at time of release would be discarded if kept over a week.

The 4-H livestock judging team members, Dan Wolfe, Jason Timmerman, Dan Kunkee and John O'Dea won state fair and participated in the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest in Louisville, Kentucky.

1992

The theme for the fair was "Cater the Spirit" and it was held July 24-28. 4-H pre fair events and 4-H schedule was listed in the Open Class Premium Book. Events started on Monday, July 6, with the B.B. gun contest and the archery contest at the Ag Complex. On July 13 the bicycle rodeo was held at 10:00 A.M. and the 4-H Talent Contest was held at the McCook High School Auditorium at 7:00 P.M. on July 16. Saturday, July 18, was the fashion revue judging at 8:00 a.m. at the Walsh-Brady Building on the college campus, followed by clothing construction judging.

Many specialized 4-H exhibits were judged Thursday evening and the remainder were entered on Friday morning for judging. Open class exhibits, except flowers, poultry, rabbits and pigeons were also entered at 9:00 a.m.

The 4-H Dog Show began at 11:00, followed by the cat show. The 4-H bake and vegetable sale was held in the 4-H building and this was the first night for using the discount carnival tickets. All 4-H poultry and rabbits were entered that evening. The Friday evening grandstand event was motocross racing.

On Saturday, July 25, all 4-H livestock was entered and open class poultry, rabbits, pigeons, and flowers. Judging of 4-H rabbits and poultry began at 9:00 a.m. and the 4-H building opened at noon. The 4-H livestock judging contest was held in the afternoon, followed by the mini tractor pull, 4-H rabbit showmanship contest, and opening of the merchant's building. The Dean Short Marionette's was the free show on the grounds and the evening performance was the Nebraska Tractor Pullers Association Tractor Pull.

Sunday began with the 4-H Horse Show in the Horse Arena and the 4-H building was open at noon, with the merchant's building open at 2:00. The high point winners in horse show competition were Cherri Ruggles, Jessica Haag and Sarah Jo Frazier.

The 4-H rocket contest was held at the baseball complex at 3:00 and the poultry building opened at 4:30. The Marionette's free show began at 6:00 and was followed by the 4-H Fashion Revue on the Youth in Action Stage. Fashion show awards were presented to Erin O'Brien, Brianne Heinz, Kristen O'Brien, Michele Neel and Kristin Timmerman. The evening featured the PRCA rodeo with trick rider and clown, Brother and Vicky Taylor.

Monday began with 4-H market swine, followed by lamb, and beef judging. The 4-H building was opened at 1:00 and open class opened at 4:00. For the third year in a row, Jason Timmerman won Grand champion steer. The swine show was won by Danny Wolfe and Wesley McCollam showed the champion lamb. Other 4-H awards went to Tennile Beeby for senior clothing construction champion and Gary Bales received the trophy for self-designed rocket.

The Marionette's free show appeared on the grounds and rodeo ticket holders could attend a Chuck Wagon Barbeque with entertainment by Summer, Wine, featuring Peggy Light. The rodeo followed.

Tuesday was an active day for 4-Hers with swine showmanship, breeding and sheep showmanship, dairy judging and showmanship, goat judging and showmanship, breeding beef and showmanship, stocker feeder judging and the finale for the day was the beef showmanship contest.

Showmanship contest winners for the beef contest were Ben Siegfried, Brett Harsh, and Danielle Thomas. In swine showmanship Matthew Wolfe took top senior honors and Keith Brooks won the junior division. The intermediate showmanship winner was Teresa Tucker and Joe Wolfe was named the beginning division winner.

All 4-H exhibits were released except those listed for the sale and all open class exhibits were released at 4:00. The merchants building and carnival were open that evening and the grandstand featured the Scarlett Ribbons Drill team and a team penning contest from 6:30 to 7:30. The 4-H livestock sale was again held at the fairground's arena on Wednesday morning.

1993

"Company's Coming" was the 1993 theme for the fair on July 22-25. Presale carnival tickets were available at Ben Franklin, A&M, Farrell's, Country Corner, Blumme's, KICX, Vic's, Alco, Dutch Oven, DeGroff's, D&S, U-Save Pharmacy, Ivanhoe's West, and Hinky Dinky. D.C. Lynch Shows of Chapman, Ne., provided the carnival. Tickets were sold in

sheets of 20 for \$5.00. Two bicycles were given away in a drawing from entries in the ticket sales.

A notice appeared in the premium book that open class exhibits will be in the old 4-H building for the 1993 fair. Please enter items at south end of 4-H building. Open class entries were entered on Thursday, July 22. Many 4-H entries for specialized projects such as rockets, computers, ceramics, poster, safety, etc. were entered from 6:00 to 8:00 the previous evening.

Livestock was checked in between 8:00 and 11:00 on Wednesday and the 4-H livestock judging contest was that afternoon. There was no entertainment or carnival on Wednesday, but the Chris Short Marionettes began the first of three shows on Thursday evening. Another free show on the grounds was Country Garden, with musical entertainment. Team penning with a specialty act was the grandstand entertainment. The 4-H horse show was held on Thursday morning and the 4-H rabbit and poultry judging was also that morning.

Friday, July 23, was the day for the market swine, lamb, and beef judging. That evening the free shows again appeared on the grounds. A Hog Calling Contest began at 6:00, along with a free watermelon feed. Evening entertainment was the Outlaw Tractor Pull. The merchant's building did not open until 6:00 P.M., but the exhibit building was open at 2:30. The merchant's building stayed open until 11:00 P.M. each evening.

Beginning at 8:00 on Saturday morning was the swine showmanship, followed by breeding sheep judging and sheep showmanship. The goat and dairy show completed the morning events and the 4-H building was open at noon. Breeding beef, stocker feeder and beef showmanship events completed the 4-H livestock show judging. The merchant's building opened at 2:00 on Saturday.

Saturday evening events included the free shows on the grounds and the PRCA rodeo, billed as "Nebraska's Best Rodeo". Donny Landis of Suzzanneville, California provided the specialty act the Cornbelt Chemical sponsored the bullfight. The new Southwest Nebraska Rodeo Queen was crowned the first night of the rodeo. Rodeo stock was provided by Powder River Stock Company of Wyoming that had the 1991 "Horse of the Year". There was no free barbeque and a press release in the McCook Daily Gazette stated that rodeo organizers had to put more funding towards prize money to entice bigger names to take part in the rodeo.

The rocket launch contest was held at the baseball complex at 1:00 on Sunday at the baseball complex. It can be noted that not all rockets landed in the complex. The landing point was marked and measured from the launch point.

Sunday evening the 4-H fashion revue was held on the Youth in Action Stage at 6:00. All 4-H exhibits were then released, except for the livestock remaining to be sold the

next day. The final performance of the rodeo was held Sunday evening. The auction began at 9:00 in the fairground's arena on Monday, July 26.

A list of clerks assisting at the fair includes; Sandi Pettera, Joyce Neel, Donna Kircher, Norma Klein, Virginia Meyers, Liana Rich, Sondra Rathjen, Sharon Timmerman, Barb Hinz, Rae Hoss, Diane Cobb, Pat Downer, Shirley Axtell, Kathy Doyle, Kem McConville, Barb Doyle, Jane Rayer, Lora O'Brien, Dick Cappel, Leigh Hoyt, Tom and Kelly Tirrill, Terry Doyle, Dick Rayer, Denise McConville, Dave Colling, Mary Hayes, Deb Spencer, Michelle Macfee, Brian and Carol Hauxwell, Trudy Waddell, Merlin Cook, Vicki Cook, Dave Ruppert, Darla Ruppert, Mary Jo Teter, Linda Ruppert, Rene Bagley, Sandy McConville, Kaylea Schauer, Penny Minary, Hazel Bobinmeyer, Claudetta Peck, Karen Heng, Barb Bortner, Merwin and Virginia Grafton, Joan Blackwelder, Barb Gillett, Geri Carper, Dallas Talkington and Dan Wolfe.

1994

July 21-25 were the dates of the fair with the theme "Come and Share the Fun". It was the first year for the Community Building and the home economics judging contest was held there on June 28, as were the B.B. gun contest and the archery contest on July 11. The 4-H talent contest was on July 12 at the McCook High School Auditorium. McCook Community College Walsh Brady building was the site of the clothing and dress review judging on Saturday, July 16. Other pre events were the bicycle rodeo on July 18 and the cat show and the dog show at the fairgrounds on Tuesday, July 19.

Entry day for livestock, poultry and rabbits was on Wednesday morning and evening, along with the specialized 4-H projects. Thursday was the first day of the fair with the carnival opening that evening and team penning was in front of the grandstand.

Livestock judging had the spotlight on Friday and action on the grounds at 6:30 included Buttons the Clown and then one hour of strolling entertainment after the 7:30 show. Ostrich races were held at 8:00 in front of the grandstand and there was a live band in the ag complex parking lot for the evening, beginning at 9:00.

The same 4-H schedule was in place for Saturday with breeding shows and showmanship. The Lil 'Red Tractor Pull for kids began at 4:00 and Buttons, the clown made his appearance at 6:30. The carnival opened at 6:00.

Powder River Rodeo Productions produced the PRCA rodeo. The production company was owned and operated by Hank and Lori Franzen from Wright, Wyoming, and they produced and leased up to 35 rodeos a year. Their horse, "Khadafy Skoal" was the bareback horse in the nation in 1990. Butch Lehmkuhler from North Platte, Nebraska was the rodeo clown.

Sunday followed the same schedule as the previous year with exhibits being released after the fashion show. The second performance of the rodeo was that evening. The Monday schedule was the 4-H premium sale at 9:00 A.M., and open class exhibits were released that morning. The carnival was still on the grounds and opened at 6:00 and a square dance was held in the ag complex parking lot at 8:00 P.M. with Marshall Poole as the caller.

1995

“Make Tracks to the Red Willow County Fair”, was the theme for the fair July 19-24. Pre fair events included the 4-H talent contest at the McCook High School Auditorium, fashion revue and home economics judging in the fair board community building, along with a 4-H presentation contest. On Friday, July 14, the B.B. gun contest and the archery contests were also held in the community building. The bicycle rodeo was on July 17, at 9:00 in the morning at the ag complex parking lot.

Entry days were July 19 and 20, with open class entries on Tuesday evening from 6:00-8:00, and on Thursday morning 9:00-noon. New entry tags arrived for the 4-H members and they were triplicate tags. Every contest needed a tag and livestock exhibitors were informed to call their 4-H leader and report the number of animals they planned to exhibit by July 10. There was also a statement in the open class premium book that stated, “We encourage professional (anyone who derives 50% or more of their income by selling their homemade product) craftsmen and women to enter open class, but ask that they print “professional” in block letters at the bottom of their entry tag. They will receive participation ribbons instead of money.” Colored sections were used in the 4-H premium book to assist distinguishing different contests and entries.

The cat show and dog show were held on July 18. Livestock check-in and the livestock judging contest was held on July 19. Carnival rides were available that evening and a mutton busting contest was held in front of the grandstand. The 4-H horse show began at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday morning and was held in front of the grandstand. All remaining food items were entered, and the poultry and rabbit judging were held that morning. The Lion’s club health van was in the ag complex parking lot for the first two days of the fair to check hearing, blood pressure, blood sugar, sight and glaucoma from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Circus Time free entertainment starring “The Willettys” appeared on the Youth in Action stage for three performances for three days beginning on Thursday. A Team Penning contest was held at the grandstand and the evening ended with square dancing at 8:00 with Marshall Poole from Axtell calling the dances.

Livestock judging began the day on Friday and a new evening event prior to the free entertainment was a Cow Pie and Cow Chip Throwing Contest, sponsored by McCook National Bank. The headliner for the fair, Kenney Chesney, was the grandstand show. Tickets cost \$7.00 advance and \$9.00 at the time of the show. Ticket holders were eligible for a drawing for a free trip to Branson which was sponsored by Adventure Travel. Entertainment was sponsored by KICX, however there were no specifics about their sponsorship.

Saturday's schedule was the same as previous years for 4-H with the stocker feeder, breeding shows, dairy, and showmanship contests. The Lil 'Red Tractor Pedal Pull for kids was held at the ag complex parking lot. A new event was stick pony races for 3-6 age bracket. The PRCA rodeo began at 8:00 and Cornbelt Chemical sponsored the bullfight. The Scarlett Ribbons Drill Team preformed. Follow the rodeo a parking lot dance was held by the Ag Complex with Joe Leamon Band performing.

The M.C. Cruisers Car Club showed their cars on Sunday afternoon and the rocket launch contest was at the ball complex. That evening the fashion revue was at 6:00, and the free entertainment performed, followed by another rodeo performance. Myrna Harper oversaw the rodeo queen contest. The livestock sale was held on Monday morning at 9:00 and all exhibits were released from 9:00-2:00.

1996

"Head 'em up....Moove 'em out!" was the action theme for the fair on July 16-22. Open class exhibits, except flowers were entered on July 16 in the morning and evening, and everything was judged in open class after 8:00 P.M. It was a long night for judges, superintendents, and clerks. There were two new opportunities for open class competition, one for artists or workmanship, and the Best of Show, Crowd Choice award which was determined by vote of the public.

On Wednesday the same 4-H schedule was followed as in the past. The open class building was open at 5:00 -9:00 and featured Gary Ginther's Museum Dinosaurs and Quit Displays. and it was kid's night at the carnival. Mutton busting was held at the grandstand at 7:00 that evening. Coyote Country radio station sponsored ribbon roping, which was a new event, along with a POG contest and a Learn to be a Husker Contest.

Flowers were entered on Thursday and a junior team penning contest was held in from of the grandstand at 6:00 P.M., followed team penning with Calcutta.

Everyone was invited to a "free" Bar-be-que at 7:30 on Friday evening followed by a grandstand show, Texas the Band. A dance followed. All of this was sponsored by T-Bone Club, KICX radio, Adventure Travel and the Red Willow Co. Fair Board.

All open class poultry, rabbits and small animals were entered on Saturday, July 20. The Lil' Red Tractor Pull was held at 5:00 on Saturday. Every evening "Chocky and his Pals" were free entertainment sponsored by McCook National Bank. The PRCA Rodeo with Cornbelt Chemical Bullfight and Scarlet Ribbons Drill Team were the feature Saturday and Sunday evenings. The stick horse races were held again for kids, ages 2-6, on Sunday at 5:00.

4-H winners included Brianne Hinz, Kristen O'Brien and Shannon Nix for the talent contest. Overall high point individual winners in horse were Sibyl Quigley and Josh Pollmann, Justin Pollma, and Stacy Worman. Cat show winners were Alissa Reiners, Lindsay Rupe and Amanda Evans. Winners of the dog show were Megan Davidson, Josey Stone, Alissa Reiners, and Justin Coleman.

Robert Haag was president of the fair board, LeRoy Leibrandt, vice-president, and Bruce Swanson was secretary. Other board members were Harlow Daffer, Kenneth Downer, Albert Hayes, Kenneth Kircher and Don Klein. Deb Lafferty was fair manager, Linda Koetter, open class superintendent and Sheri Sughrue, poultry building superintendent.

1997

The open class premium book featured two messages on the front cover. One stated, "Kids + county fair=un" and "Just Forget Your Problems and Come to the Red Willow Co. Fair!!!" on July 18-22nd.

A 4-H schedule included the same activities as in previous years. Open class exhibits continued to be accepted twice during the day on Thursday, July 17. Premium awards for vegetables were \$2.00, \$1.00, and \$.75 and the top garden display could win \$3.00. The same officers and fair personnel were listed. The open class building now opened at 5:00 instead of 6:00 each evening. Ribbon awards were purple, blue and red, instead of blue, red, and white. However, white ribbons were always a standby for an exhibit that lacked merit.

There was a note to have exhibits FRESH (free of smoke smell), CLEAN, and NEAT". All baked goods were automatically donated to the 4-H bake sale.

Carnival rides were available each night of the fair and discount tickets could be purchased from special merchants July 8-15. Steve Trash was on the midway for continuous shows throughout the fair, sponsored by McCook National Bank. Junior

team penning was held at 1:00 on Friday and Mutton Busting began at 6:00 at the grandstand, with Team Penning with Calcutta following.

Special events on Saturday were the stick pony races for kids ages 2-6, the tractor pedal pull, and the PRCA rodeo with Cornbelt Chemical Bull fight and scarlet Ribbons Drill Team began at 8:00 P.M.

Brad Randall held a Cowboy Church service on Sunday morning at the grandstand. New for this year was the Chore Relay at 4:00 at the grandstand. Team members had chores to do in a timed manner, including milking a cow or goat. The evening ended with another rodeo, bullfight, and Scarlet Ribbons drill team performance.

Michael Martin Murphey Concert by Windhaven and sponsored by KKYT, was the grandstand performance on Monday evening. Everyone was invited to a free Bar-Be-Q and grandstand show, "Texas the Band" on Tuesday evening, followed by a free dance all sponsored by the T-Bone Club, KICX radio, and the Red Willow Co. Fair Board. Lodging for the band was provided by McCook's Holiday Inn Express.

Fashion revue champion winners were Kate Wolford, Lindsey Esch, Lanay Manker, Kendra Bates, Kendra Cobb and Kathryn Manker. Family and consumer judging contest senior winners were Alica Lockhorn, Thomas Power and Lacey Manker. Rebecca Nichols was a medal winner for her presentation on "Making Paper".

1998

This fair was billed as the 125th celebration of Red Willow County. The fair began on Wednesday, July 15 for entries both at 9:00 in the morning and 6-7:30 in the evening with judging to follow. A note in the premium book stated that no business cards could be displayed with entries in the artist or workmanship recognition exhibit.

Thursday was Pepsi Globe Day with the events starting at 5:00 in the afternoon. It started with a baby contest which was reminiscence with the 1920 fair when a baby contest was held. This contest for 0-2 was for the bluest eyes, reddest hair, biggest smile, baldest, most identical twins, and more. There was a cash in the sand contest with two divisions for 3-4, and 4-5. Arm wrestling had three divisions:7-8,9-10, and 11-12. There was a Tug of War for junior and senior high ages and an egg toss for adults. The evening grandstand show was performed by Tonic Sol-Fa, a talented group of young men who sang cappella.

The Chris Short puppet personalities performed continuous shows each evening sponsored by McCook National Bank. Friday featured a Starship concert featuring Mickey Thomas, that was known for their songs: "Sarah", "It's Not Over till It's Over", "White Rabbit", and "Somebody to Love".

A PRCA rodeo was again featured both Saturday and Sunday evenings. There was the traditional red tractor pedal pull for all kids ages 4-12 with the winners qualifying for the state fair event. The Miss Southwest Rodeo Queen was crowned on Saturday evening.

Cowboy church with Brad Randall was held at the grandstand on Sunday morning and a Draft Horse Pull organized by board member Ken Kircher, followed at 1:00. Ken Kircher stated in an interview on April 30, 2020, that this was one of the most enjoyable features he was involved with during his fair service, because everyone there was doing something they liked to do. Prize money was paid, but the end goal was to have fun with the horses. The Chore Relay with a Calcutta was at 4:00, and the Pioneer Award for a family residing on the same land for 100 years was given prior to the rodeo.

McCook National Bank sponsored a mutton busting contest at 5:00, and the evening featured a free Bar-Be-Q at 6:30. The 4-H livestock sale was held under the big top at 7:00 P.M. to end the fair activities.

Fashion show 4-H winners were Morgan Pearson, Kate Wolford and Lacy Manker, grand champions. Reserve honors were Taryn Plazek and Cassie Miller. Bicycle contest rodeo event winners were Lisa Daffer, Rebecca Nichols, and Robert Proud. The BB Gun contest was won by Adam Wolford, Davin Doyle, and Travis Harsh. Home economics judging contest winners were Angela Minary, Amanda Goodenberger, Michelle Neel, Chelsea Morgan and Jennifer Daffer. Horse judging contest award winners were Dani Rose Pettera, Cody Bobinmeyer, Josh Pollmann and Dylan Ruppert.

Stephen Fassler won the casting contest and Shawn Daffer received the archery contest medal, along with Davin Doyle. Cat show awards went to Justin Pollmann and Alissa Reiners.

In an earlier contest the speech and PSA contest winners were Brian Friehe, Angela Geishler, Dani Rose Pettera and Cory Gaston. The talent contest was won by a vocal group made up of Alissa Reiners, Renee Minary, Chelsey Tiller, Regina Minary and Melody Nelms. The Farmer Charmers also received the opportunity to participate at the state fair.

1999

“Everybody’s There” was the theme for the July 15-19 county fair. Fair activities began on Wednesday July 14 for open class entries. Discount ticket sheets for the carnival rides, good all five nights, were on sale at KICX\KBRL, Video Kingdom, Rocket Inn, Dutch Oven, Dayco, First National Bank, K-Store-Culbertson, KKYT, Hinky Dinky, U-Save Pharmacy, and Amfirst Bank. Advance sale had to be completed by July 12.

Team Penning was featured at the grandstand on Thursday evening, and Quilt displays were the feature in the open class exhibits.

All Star Wrestling was the feature on Friday evening. Board member, Don Klein, stated that his most memorable fair moment occurred when they brought the professional wrestlers to perform and there was an incident involving Bruce Swanson, also a board member, and a wrestler at the city auditorium. He stated that Bruce's eyes were as big as "saucers". He did not elaborate on any details.

Saturday evening featured the crowning of the Miss S.W. Rodeo Queen and the PRCA rodeo, with a specialty act and Ring of Fire with the bulls. The tractor pedal pull was also held in the ag complex parking lot for ages 4-12.

Cowboy Church with Brad Randel was on Sunday morning and a draft horse pull began at 2:00, with Ken Kircher in charge of the event. Pepsi Day Games were held in the ag complex parking lot at 6:00, and the rodeo followed.

Southwest Nebraska Cattleman Affiliate provided a free Bar-Be-Q at 5:00, followed by the 4-H livestock sale. A demolition derby was held at the grandstand that evening. "Balloon Buffoon (Joe Thompson)" was on the midway for continuous shows throughout the fair, sponsored by McCook National Bank, and Sparky.

4-H Dog show winners were Jessica Einspahr, Regina Minary, Cory Gaston, Angela Minary, Justin Pollman, Mason Nelms, Alissa Reiners and Sarah Bamesberger. High point individuals in horse performance were Trishsa Bamesberger, Stacy Worman, Sarah Bamberger and James Slattery. Cat show winners were Cory Gaston with the grand and reserve champion kitten and Renee Minary with the grand champion adult cat. Reserve champion adult cat was won by Justin Polman. Speech contest winners were Brian Friehe, Cory Gaston, Amy Sughroue, Kate Wolford and Lucas Haag.

BB Gun contest medallion winners were Dylan Ruppert and Chris Quigley. Davon Doyle won the archery contest which was held on July 12. Chris Leyba won the medallion in the casting contest and bicycle winners were Stephen Fassler, Tyler Hayes, and Bronwyn Sharitka. The Beaver Valley 4-H Club won the talent dance contest.

Jamey Hansen became a board member in 1999.

A New Era

2000

Family Quality Time was the theme chosen for 2000. An attractive painting by Amy Hock was featured on the Open Class Premium book for the fair July 20-24. Open class exhibits were entered on Wednesday, July 19 from (9:30 in the morning until two in the afternoon). The 4-H exhibits were also entered with the 4-H

Bake sale held in the community building on Thursday, July 20, the first official day of the fair. The Chore Relay began at 7:30 in the evening with a Calcutta. The Amfirst Bank's Mutton Busting contest was held at 8:30 in the evening and quilt displays were featured in the open class building.

Friday evening's entertainment was a Pickup, Tractor, and S.U.V. pull sponsored by KICX/KBRL radio station. The weigh in and entry fee payment was held at the Frenchman Valley Coop from 3:00-6:00. A dance with "Fear of Flying" was held at the Ag Complex parking lot at 9:00.

A petting zoo for the children was made possible by the McCook Ag Task Force. The midway was open at 6:00 each evening and "Charles Stron-stilt walker", sponsored by McCook National Bank, appeared on the midway for continuous shows throughout the fair.

The RRCA rodeo was featured on Saturday and Sunday evenings. The specialty act and Ring of Fire with the bulls was sponsored by 105.3 Coyote Country radio station.

Brad Randel held his Cowboy Church at the grandstand on Sunday morning and a Draft Horse Pull was held in the afternoon. A band, "Significant Light", played in the Ag Complex parking lot prior to the Sunday evening rodeo.

The last entertainment was a demo derby that featured a \$1,600 purse plus \$10 from each entry fee. Jerry Rippen was the contact for the event, with KICX/KBRL sponsoring the feature.

2001

The theme for this year was "For Family Fun, We're the Number One". Fair dates were July 18-23.

Thursday evening was the Stock Car Races and cost was \$8.00 for adults and \$5.00 for 5-13. The classes included IMCA Modified, Hobby Stock, Classic Modified and Mini-Sprints. Donny Sailors was the contact and it was sponsored by K-Rock 98.5 radio station. County Singer Michael Mason was the feature on Friday evening and his performance was sponsored by Coyote Country 105.3 and 93.9 The Prairie radio stations.

The PRCA Rodeo again appeared on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Other features the weekend included the Lil'Red Tractor Pedal Pull for all kids, sponsored by Adams Bank & Trust, the Prairie Statesman Chorus & Key of G , Cowboy Church with Brad Randel, The Draft Horse Pull, and the Chore Relay which was sponsored by the Oldies 1300 KBRL. The radio stations again sponsored the Specialty Act and Ring of Fire with the bulls.

There was a petting zoo for the children made possible by the McCook Ag Task Force and the carnival opened each evening at 6. Another fair feature was "Rodney Rooster's Roadster" which was on the midway for two stage performances and three drive around shows each night. It was sponsored by the McCook National Bank and Sparky's Kid Club.

The final evening featured the Demolition Derby in front of the grandstand, sponsored by 96.1 KICX radio.

Robert Haag was president of the fair board, LeRoy Leibrandt was vice President, and Bruce Swanson was secretary. Deb Lafferty was the fair manager and office assistant was Lindsey Haag. Head of Maintenance was Bob Purvis, and Sherry Lytle was the Open Class Superintendent. Sheri Sughroue was the poultry building superintendent.

2002

"Round up all your friends and come to the fair!" was the theme utilized in 2002 for the Fair July 18-22. The schedule followed previous fairs with discount ticket sheets for carnival rides, all five nights, were on sale at KICX/KBRL, McCook National Bank, Video Kingdom, Rocket Inn, Schnert's Bakery, Parker, 105.3 Coyote Country, U-Save Pharmacy, Sun Mart, and clerk's office in the Courthouse.

All open class was entered on Wednesday, July 17, and judging was in the evening. No information was available concerning the 4-H Schedule.

Stock Car Races were the grandstand entertainment. KICX, 96.1, hosted the event. The open class building featured quilt displays and it was the first night for the Merchant building to be open.

Friday evening featured the St. Alban's Puppeteers, Faithful Fools- "Bumpy the Clown", and children's music with Adrienne Randel in the Big Top from 5:30-7:30 P.M. The Colgate Superstar Showdown-talent contest was hosted by Coyote Country 105.3/The Prairie 93.9 from 6:30 to 8 P.M. The location was not listed. At 8:00 the Advocates, a gospel music group performed, and at 9:30 the Christian Rock Band, "Significant Light" presented their show.

Saturday's line up included a Kids Ranch Rodeo, sponsored by First Central Bank at the grandstand at 4:30, followed by the Lil'Red Tractor Pedal Pull for all kids at the ag complex parking lot, sponsored by Adams Bank & Trust. The first night of the PRCA rodeo, hosted by Coyote Country 105.3/The Prairie 93.9, featured the crowning of Miss South West Nebraska Rodeo Queen and introduction of Miss Rodeo Nebraska, Lori Bortner. The rodeo featured the Rodney Gaston Specialty Act.

Cowboy Church with Brad Randel opened Sunday's activities and the open class building opened at 1:00. McCook Farm Equipment's Draft Horse Pull was held at the grandstand in the afternoon, followed by Southwest Implement's Chore Relay at 4:00. The Pepsi's Cheerleader contest was held at 5 and a dance with DJ Jesse Stevens followed at 9. The rodeo was hosted by K-Rock 98.5/KFNF that evening and the Velvet Spurs drill team also performed.

Another specialty act performing on the grounds throughout the fair was "The Amazing Arthur, The Yo-Yo Man". He also did comedy juggling, stilt walking and balloon artistry! His act was sponsored by McCook National Bank and Sparky's Kids Club. The carnival opened at 6:00 P.M. each evening.

The final evening featured the 4-H Premium sale under the Big Top at 6:00. The Demolition Derby, hosted by K-Rock 98.5, was the final grandstand event at 8:30.

All open class exhibits were released on Tuesday morning. Premiums in open class varied from \$2.50 for a purple in foods, \$3.00, in clothing, \$2.50 in photography, \$1.50 in crafts, \$2.00 for purples in vegetables, fruits, nuts, and eggs, and the same in poultry and rabbits. Some special exhibits such as oddest shaped vegetable paid a \$5.00 premium.

2003

"Grow It and Show It at the Red Willow County Fair" was selected as the theme for the July 23-27 Fair. The open class premium book also included a page that requested ideas, changes, and suggestions. A change included the availability of a wristband for \$15.00 that could be used the first night of the fair from 7-10. Discount ticket sheets good for all five nights were available July 14-21.

A similar schedule for entering exhibits on July 22 was followed and the entertainment began on Wednesday, July 23, at 5 P.M. with church entertainment, including comedian Torry Martin in the Kiplinger Arena. This was the first year to utilize the arena which was made possible with donations from Tom Kiplinger and his mother, Alice.

The Colgate Country Showdown Talent Contest, including guest appearance by Chad Simmons was held at the grandstands, hosted by Coyote Country 105.3/ The Prairie 93.9. The 4-H building opened at 5 P.M. along with the open class building, which again featured quilt displays, and the Merchant's building.

The LII' Red Tractor Pedal Pull was held in the Kiplinger Arena on Thursday, and the feature entertainment, hosted by KICX 96.1 was the stock car races.

Saturday began with opening of the 4-H and open class buildings and at 3 P.M. the First Central Bank's Mutton Busting was held in Kiplinger. It was followed by Southwest Implement's Chore Relay at 5 P.M. The Nebraska State Rodeo Association Rodeo began at 8 P.M. It is noted the change from the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association to the Nebraska association was made to encourage more local and area cowboys to participate in the rodeo. This rodeo was hosted by K-ROCK 98.5 & 101.1 KFNF.

Sunday again featured Cowboy Church in the Kiplinger Arena and the 4-H and open class buildings opened at 1 P.M. McCook Farm Equipment's Draft Horse Competition was also held in the Kiplinger Area in the afternoon. A Figure Eight Race for stock cars was held at the grandstands at 3:00 P.M. and the 4-H Premium sale was held at 6:00 in the Kiplinger building. The open class exhibits were released on Monday and a team Penning Contest was held at the Kiplinger Arena on Monday evening. During the five days of the fair, from Wednesday through Sunday, a comedy Magician, Steve Corbitt, billed as "Everybody's Favorite Uncle" performed close-up sleight of hand magic and comedy magic stage shows. McCook National Bank and Sparky's Kids Club sponsored his shows.

A change was made in the premium book to add a Pee Wee Division for ages 8 and under. There was a junior division for ages 9-16, adult division for 17-74, and if over 75, or handicapped, the exhibitor marked "S" on the entry tag.

Fair board officers were Robert Haag, president, Don Klein, vice president, and Bruce Swanson Secretary. Other fair board members listed were Harlow Daffer, Danbury, Dave Burton, Bartley, Albert Hayes, Bartley, Kenneth Kircher, Indianola, Barney Lake, McCook, and Paul Schaffert, Indianola.

2004

It was the same schedule for the fair with entries on Tuesday, July 27, and the fair concluded on Monday, August 2. A new feature was the LogHoggers, sponsored by McCook National Bank, who did chainsaw sculpting demonstrations during the fair.

Church Entertainment began at 5 P.M. on Wednesday evening which featured Simple Grace. The Colgate Country Showdown talent contest, including guest appearance by Pete Schlegel and Brooks Atwood was held at in front of the grandstands. This event was hosted by Coyote Country 105.3 /The Prairie 93.9. Stock Car Races hosted by KICX96.1/ KFNF 101.1 were the main event on Thursday evening.

The NSRA Rodeo was held at the grandstands on Friday preceded by the crowning of Miss South West Nebraska Rodeo Queen and Princess. Saturday afternoon featured the First Central Bank's Mutton Busting at the Kiplinger Arena and the Timmerman Feed Corporation hosted the Chore Relay at 5 P.M. The Pioneer Family Award was given at the rodeo which was again the main event on Saturday.

All denominations were welcome for Cowboy Church on Sunday morning at the Kiplinger Arena and the exhibit buildings were open at 1:00. The 4-H Premium Sale was held at Kiplinger at 6 P.M. following the Tri State Livestock's Draft Horse Competition.

The evening main event was the Demolition Derby hosted by K-Rock 98.5 & Oldies 1300 KBRL. This was the last night of the fair for the carnival. Exhibits were released on Monday morning and a team penning event was held on Monday evening at the Kiplinger Arena to conclude the fair.

2005

The theme for the fair held July 27-31 was "Blue Jeans and Country Dreams". The fair followed a similar schedule from the previous year with entries for open class were made on Tuesday.

Church entertainment on Wednesday at 5 P.M. was the Legacy Quartet. The Colgate County Showdown Talent Contest included a guest appearance by Danni O'Neill. The exhibit buildings and merchant's buildings opened at five.

Thursday featured an open class dog show for the first time at 1:00. The Lil'Red Tractor Pedal Pull was held at 6:0 in Kiplinger and the evening featured Stock Car Races hosted by KICX 96.1. Trophies were provided by Mike's Achievement Plus trophy stored.

Robin's School of Dance held a recital in the Kiplinger Arena at 6 :00. The crowning of Miss South West Nebraska Rodeo Queen and Princess began the NSRA rodeo at the

grandstands. Coyote Country 105.3 hosted the rodeo. The rodeo was held again on Saturday evening and it was preceded by the Mutton Busting contest at 4:00 and the South West Implement Company Chore Relay which were held in the Kiplinger Arena.

The LogHoggers Chainsaw Sculpting demonstrations were sponsored by Sun-Mart and an auction preceded the rodeo. The Pioneer Family Award was also presented. Another special act was Shawn Gregory, brought to the fair by MNB. He presented a magical state show plus he strolled through the fair on stilts. Lodging for Shawn and the LogHoggers was provided by Days Inn & Suites and Holiday Inn Express.

Sunday was technically the last full day of fair and wristbands could be purchased for discount rides from 7- 10 that evening. Cowboy Church again was held on Sunday morning and the Tri State Livestock's Draft Horse Competition was held in Kiplinger Arena at 1 P.M. with Ken Kircher in charge of the event. Another new event was the horseshoe tournament held at the big top at 3 P.M. The 4-H Premium sale began at 6:00 in the Kiplinger arena and the evening entertainment was Timmerman Feeding Corporation's Wild Horse Race and steer riding at the grandstands.

Officers of the board were Robert Haag, president, Don Klein, vice President, Bruce Swanson, secretary and other board members were Harlow Daffer, Dave Burton, Albert Hayes, Kenneth Kircher, Barney Lake, and Paul Schaffert. Deb Lafferty was fair manager and her assistant was Jessica Watkins. Charlie Collins was head of maintenance.

2006

The theme of the July 23-27 fair was "Time flies when you're having fun". Discount tickets were sold in advance for the carnival and wristband were made available for the last night of the fair.

The Colgate Country Showdown talent contest was held at 6:30 on Wednesday and followed by a concert by Blake Marvin. This was a free event. A new event on Thursday was the Trucker's Insurance Corporation's Show & Shine Semi-Truck Show at 3:00. The Adams Bank & Trust's Lil red Tractor Pedal Pull provided an opportunity for competition for kids and eligibility to participate at the state fair. Stock car races were the main event at the grandstands.

Friday's events included a dance recital from Robin's School of Dance and the Nebraska State Rodeo Association's rodeo with the crowning of the rodeo queen and princess.

Exhibit buildings opened early on Saturday and the First Central Bank's Mutton Busting was held at 4 P.M. in the Kiplinger Arena, followed by the Amfirst Bank's Chore Relay. The Rodeo completed the entertainment with the Show & Shine Semi-Truck Parade.

Sunday began with the Cowboy church service which by this time had become a fair tradition with Brad Randel. The Tri State Livestock's Draft Horse Competition under direction of Ken Kircher was held in the afternoon. The 4-H Premium sale began at 5:30 and the evening's entertainment was the Timmerman Feeding Corporation's Steer Riding and Nebraska Lotter's Wild Horse Races.

Special events for the week were provided by Colors Da Clown with face-painting and balloons every night in the community building, Wild Encounters experience with exotic animals on the midway every night, and the Republican Valley Woodchips featured artists in the community building. These events were made possible by McCook National Bank and Schmick's Market.

Jay Schilling was a new board member, replacing Dave Burton.

2007

Fair dates were July 25-29 with the theme "The tradition continues at the Red Willow County Fair!". As in the past entries were brought for judging the day before the fair.

The Colgate Country Showdown was held at the Kiplinger arena, hosted by Coyote Country 105.3 at 5:30. The radio station also hosted the Country Concert featuring Rushlow-Harris at the grandstands at 8:00 with an admission cost of \$10.00.

The open class dog show was held at 1:00 on July 26, followed by the Lil' Red Tractor Pedal Pull for kids at 5:00. The Stock Races at the grandstands were hosted by KICS 96.1/K-Rock 98.5, and trophies were provided by Mike's Achievement Plus.

Friday's events began at 7:00 with a presentation of Hawk Stock dogs, sponsored by Schmick's Market in the Kiplinger Arena. The NSRA Rodeo began at 8:00 in front of the grandstands.

Saturday's events were the same as the previous year with the Mutton Busting and the Chore Relay held at Kiplinger and then the rodeo was in front of the grandstands.

Sunday's events also were the same with the Cowboy Church, Tri State Livestock's Draft Horse Competition. 4-H premium sale, and Timmerman Feeding Corporation's Steer Riding and Wild Horse Races.

Colors Da Clown and Rainbow Trout face painting and balloons were again in the community building. McCook National Bank sponsored the event and Holiday Inn provided the lodging. A working dog exhibition by Hawk Stock Dogs was sponsored on Friday by Schmick's Market and the featured local artists in the community building for the week were Ken and Becky Meyers.

2008

2009

4-H winners in the horse show showmanship were Amanda Shields, Haley Teter , Ericka Fisher and Dave Larington. Other champions were Holly Doyle, Bailey Honn, Melinda Shields, Andersen Gillespie, Holly Doyle, Cade Jenkins, Allison Rippe, Stephen Hofman and Ashlyn Balderston.

Dog show winners included: Mackayla Wright, Miranda Wordekemper, Nicole Dewey and Joann Neel in showmanship; Kyle Gaston and Greg Gaston, team; Madison Snyder and Bryn Carriker, novice; and Miranda Wordekemper, agility.

Fashion show champions were Cassiddy Beeby, JoAnn Neel, Marisa Esch and Mackenzie Esch. The life challenge champion winners were Kylea Stritt, Neleigh Hauxwell, Kaylie Hauxwell, Hannah Esch and Cameron Lashley.

Foods winners included Layne Stevens, Lanie Overton, Miranda Wordekemper, Kaithlyne Ellis, Kimme Neisis, Jill Fitzsimmons, Mackenzie Esch and Sara Larington. Champions of the clothing division were Emily Kircher, Cassiddy Beeby, Karlie Swink, Marisa Esch, Bryn Carriker, Sara Larington, Hannah Esch and Mackenzie Esch.

Floriculture winners included Kacy Anderson, Sara Larington, Greg Gaston and Kyle Gaston. Gardening winners were Kyle Gaston, Deven Hoelscher, Kathlyn Hauxwell and Haylee Adams.

2010

4-H photography champions were Morgan Barnhart, Lance Kelley, Devin Holecher Holly Stagemeyer. Child development champions were Mack Alspaugh and Neta Penner. In the clothing division the champions included: Ashlee Morasic, Mackenzie Esch, Marisa Esch, Hannah Esch, Hailey Esch, Bryn Carriker, Sara Larington, Miranda Wordekemper, Mattie Uerling, Katilynne Ellis and Megan Rokusek.

Fashion show winners were Hannah Esch, Hailey Esch, Kylie Hauxwell, JoAnn Neel, Mackenzie Esch, Jill Fitzsimmons, Cassidy Beebe, and Jadie Stevens.

In the foods competition the champions were Kara Jackson, JoAnn Neel, Kathlyn Hauxwell, Holland Stagemeyer, Lanay Esch, Allie McConville, Sara Larington and Mattie

Uerling. Gardening and floriculture awards went to Greg Gaston, Sara Larington, Bryn Carriker, Mary Kain and Kathlyn Hauxwell.

Samantha Yonkers and Katelyn Fritsche were winners in senior beef showmanship. Other winners were Brendon Hauxwell, Cade Cappel, Cameron Lashley and Kathlyn Hauxwell. Champion market beef was shown by Cade Cappel and Brandon Hauxwell received the reserve award. The breeding beef division champions included Cayton Pettera, Samantha Yonkers, Dave Larington, Sarah Larington, Sydney Jumps and Gavin Harsh.

The sheep showmanship winners were Kyle Gaston, Greg Gaston, Madison Boardman, Trace Doyle and Brendon Hauxwell. Breeding sheep was won by Madison Boardman and Kathlyn Hauxwell, and Madison also won the market sheep division and Brendon Hauxwell was reserve.

The market swine show winner was Nicole McConville and Ty Bennett received reserve champion. Swine showmanship champions included: Nicole McConville, Gavin Harsh, Asec Helberg, Brenton Ellis, Ty Bennett and Ashley Bennett. Haley Teter was the dairy show winner.

Goat show showmanship winners were Mack Alspaugh, Bret Neel, Greg Gaston, Amanda Slattery, JoAnn Neel and Eric Penner. The champion goat was shown by Erica Penner and Mack Alspaugh was reserve. Mack Alspaugh showed the champion mother/daughter pair.

The champion bucket calf was shown by Blake Cole and Ashlyn Balderson had reserve. Amanda Shields, Lanay Esch and Delaney Jumps were winners in the stocker feeder division.

Poultry showmanship was won by Katelyn Sughroue and Tad Lynn Waddell. Rabbit champions were Issac Larson and Tay Lynn Waddell.

Dog show winners in showmanship were Cascade Tollman, Miranda Wordkemper, and Nicole Dewey. The obedience champions were Madison Snyder, Bryn Carriker, Kyle Gaston, Seth Chancellor, Amanda Einspahr and Greg Gaston.

The horse show winners included: Emily Riley, Stephen Hoffman, Faith Teter, Amanda Shields, Dave Larington, Haley Teter, Trace Doyle, Amanda Slattery, Abigail Mohr, Anderson Gillespie, Bailey Honn, Melinda Shields, Emily Riley, Loey Morris, Veronica Bair, Colton Lashley, Alexander Whipps, Ashlyn Balderson, Allison Duper and Cade Cappel.

2011

The citizenship and civic education 4-H winners were Shane Prentice and Jill Fitzsimmons. Communication and expressive arts division winners were Maisa Esch, Kaithlyne Ellis, Debin Hoelscher, Morgan Barnhart, Sara Larington, Ashlyn Balderston and Celie Moore. Consumer and family science awards went to JoAnn Neel, Karlie Swink, Hannah Esch, Hollie Eiler (2), Sara Larington (3), Mackenzie Esch (4), Mattie Uerling (4), Hailey Esch, Ericka Fisher, Alyssa Springer, Kaithlyne Ellis and Dave Larington.

Fashion winners were JoAnn Neel, Cassiddy Beeby, Karlie Swink, Hailey Esch and Charity Malleck. Other clothing champions were Brady Esch, Kylie Hauxwell, Cara Oltmer, Zoey Morris and Ashlyn Balderston.

Food division winners were Molly Hardin, Gabriel Sehnert, Miranda Wordekemper, Celie Moore, Ericka Fisher, Holland Stagemeyer, Peyton Stagemeyer, Abby Daffer, Mattie Uerling, Sara Larington, Kimmie Neises and Mack Alspaugh.

Floriculture and gardening winners were Kacy Anderson, Sara Larington, Devin Hoelscher, Kylee Hauxwell, Jacy Ahlemeyer, Kathlyn Hauxwell and Mattie Uerling. Science and technology winners were Hannah Esch, Logan Farr, Brynn Carriker, Hollie Eiler and Kaleb Sughroue.

Beef showmanship division winners were Will Miller, Brendon Hauxwell, Cade Cappel, Cameron Lashley, Kathlyn Hauxwell and G O'Dea. Market beef champions were Cade Cappel and Brenden Hauxwell and Breeding beef winners were Kathlyn Hauxwell and Katelyn Fritsche.

Sheep showmanship winners were Brenden Hauxwell, Kyle Gaston, Greg Gaston, Trace Doyle, Maddison Boardman and Kathlyn Hauxwell. Madison Boardman showed the champion market lamb and Kyle Gaston was reserve. Greg Gaston had champion breeding sheep and Kathlyn Hauxwell was reserve.

Swine show showmanship winners were Gavin Harsh, Nicole McConville, Greg Gaston, Karlie Swink, Ashley Bennett and Ty Bennett. Champion market swine winner was Greg Gaston and Tye Bennett had reserve. Dairy show winners were Haley Teter, Logan Kircher, and Shelby Kircher.

Goat showmanship winners were Mack Alspaugh, Bret Neel, Holly Grigg, Greg Gaston, Robin Grigg and JoAnn Neel. Market goat champion was shown by Holly Grigg and Mack Alspaugh had reserve.

Dog show showmanship winners were Haley Potthoff, Greg Gaston, Amanda Einspahr, Kyle Gaston, Celie Moore and Kacy Anderson. Obedience winners were Nicole Dewey,

Kyle Gaston, Bryn Carriker, Mackeyla Wright, Amanda Einspahr, Madison Snyder and Seth Chancellor.

2012

4-H winners in beef showmanship were: Allison Rippe, junior champion, Ashylyn Balderston, reserve; Cameron Lashley, intermediate champion and reserve Deleyn Jumps; Katelyn Fritsche, senior champion and Melinda Shields, reserve. Grand champion and reserve champion steers were shown by Brandon Hauxwell. Breeding beef champions were shown by Katelyn Fritche, Allison Rippe and Melinda Shields.

Sheep showmanship was won by Kyle Gaston and Greg Gaston was reserve. Kyle Gaston had the reserve champion lamb and Madison Boardman showed the champion. Junior swine showmanship winner was Ashley Bennett and her brother Ty Bennett received reserve. Greg Gaston won senior swine showmanship and Gavin Harsh was reserve. Champion gilt was won by Ashley Bennett and Greg Gaston received reserve. Karlie Swink showed the champion barrow and Greg Gaston received reserve.

Dairy showmanship winners were Cara Oltmer and Emily Kircher in the junior division. Intermediate winner was Bailee Springer and Logan Kircher was reserve. Haley Teter was named the senior champion and Holli Oltmer was reserve. Overall dairy champion was Holli Oltmer and Haley Teter received reserve.

Goat showmanship winners included: Erica Hoyt, junior; JoAnn Neel, intermediate; and Mack Alspaugh, senior. Champion market goat was shown by Amanda Slattery and Mack Alspaugh was reserve. Mack also showed the champion breeding goat and Amanda received the reserve honor.

2013

2014

2015

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

4-H's winning champion in breeding beef were Nathan Rippe (2), Ethan Bortner, Kathlyn Hauxwell, Wesley Benes and Hayden Uerling. Braceton Hauxwell had the champion market beef and Jacob O'Dea was reserve. Nathan Rippe, Delaney Jumps and Jacob O'Dea were stocker feeder champions.

Beef showmanship winners were Braceton Hauxwell, Nathan Rippe, Wesley Benes, Wyatt Benes, Jacob O'Dea, and Kathlyn Hauxwell.

Over-all high point horse show winners were Charlie Bortner, Parker Nokes, Amber Gonzales and Allison Rippe.

Breeding goat winners were Leah Spencer and Rylie Balderston. Dairy goat champions were Tryston Adams and Gage Hammond. Olivia Hughes won both market goat championships. Goat showmanship winners were Gage Hammond, Gemma Harris, Leah Spencer, Olivia Hughes, James Neel and Rylie Balderston.

Breeding sheep champions were Keylee Johnson and Leah Spencer. Market sheep winner was Preston Bobinmeyer with champion and reserve. Showmanship awards went to Jasmine Johnson, Leah Spencer, Keylee Johnson, Preston Bobinmeyer and Kyleigh Doyle.

Dairy showmanship achievers were Mitchel Stritt, Alyssa Springer, Kylea Stritt and Nicole Dewey.

Swine show champions were Breyer Lampe, Elizabeth Siegfried, Jaci Mayers, Jack Siegfried and Treven Critchfield. Showmanship winners were Bryn Lampe, Jack Siegfried, Breyer Lampe, Ethan Boner, Ethan Spencer and Tori Honn.

Poultry champions were awarded to Aspen Kotschwar, Brady Hammond (2) W. Tyler Ellis (2) and Alexander Lashley. Showmanship winners for poultry were Leah Spencer, Axal Blomstedt, Jackson Blomstedt, Kaithlynne Ellis and Cara Oltmer.

Dog showmanship contests were won by Carlie Rupp, Jackson Bloomstedt, Abigail Neilsen, Bailey Foster, Cassiddy Beeby and James Neel. Other dog event winners were Grady Riemenschneider, Kalke Foster, Cadde Beeby (2), Ethan Spencer (2), Jackson Bloomstedt, Bailee Foster (3), Cassiddy Beeby (3), Carlie Rupp, James Neel and Abigail Neilsen.

Food division champions were Axel Bloomstedt, Alexander Lashley, Bailey Oltmer, Cadde Beeby and Kaithlyne Ellis. Fashion show winners were Elizabeth Siegfried, Amelia Minary, Bryn Lampe, Elizabeth Blume and Bailey Oltmer. The quilting contest winners were Aspen Kotschwar, Connie Snyder and Kaithlyne Ellis.

The Future

2020

This writer has interviewed several board members and family of former board members concerning the future of the fair. In this year of Covid-19, there was again uncertainty about the event.

In the past, this county has supported competition events such as horse racing, car racing, demolition derbies, 4-H and FFA events, and rodeos. For years, the carnival has been the stable component that kept the fair receipts manageable. There were a couple of situations when a carnival was not available. In a few instances, country music entertainers and television and movie stars were successful shows. However, individual entertainers and variety shows have, for the most part, been deemed failures. Former board member, Ken Kircher said that Country music singers Kenney Chesney and Neil McCoy had 200 attendees each and he laughed and stated that they felt Garth Brooks would have been humbled by McCook at the time they could have afforded to book him.

There have been many disappointments concerning entertainment. However, there have been many joys and great experiences for participants. Serving as a Board member has been a couple's experience for many years. The members became good friends and enjoyed creating and exploring new ideas. They put time and effort as couples into preparing exhibits, working ticket stands, and volunteering for new jobs. They also have been risk takers and have had success and disappointment, but all have great positive memories of fulfillment.

Today, the board experience is more individually oriented. The hands-on involvement of working the fair with all the events, has changed. Most board members cannot give up a week of work to be at the fair all the time. Technology and opportunities provide new experiences and the development of the fairgrounds for horse and rodeo events has moved the fair board into new directions. No longer is the fairgrounds main event the county fair, but hundreds and thousands come from the area and surrounding states to utilize the facilities.

4-H enrollment has declined as athletics, extracurricular and work opportunities, and summer camps compete for the youth participation. However, this figure works in

cycles and adult 4-H leaders are the key to success. Parents must be willing to contribute their time and assistance for the projects to succeed. There are challenges to provide family activities during evening hours rather than during the day.

Yes, there was a Red Willow County Fair, but it was different with less hands on and more virtual experiences. There was no carnival, but the rodeo committee decided to put on a rodeo with two performance. Sponsors were found for the event and patrons were instructed to keep socially distant. The event was approved by the Southwest Health Department. There were no merchants displays, food concessions, or open class.

The Nebraska 4-H Extension provided county fairs with guidelines for 4-H competition. All static exhibits were entered on the first day of the fair and were judged later that day. Exhibitors picked up their exhibit on Wednesday evening, July 21 and received their score cards a ribbon awards and trophies. There was no interview judging. The dog show was held on Friday, July 17 prior to the fair, and the horse show was held on July 11. Poultry, rabbits, and cats were shown and immediately released on Tuesday.

Livestock were entered and shown on the day scheduled for showing, except swine were allowed in the barns on Wednesday evening and shown on Thursday morning and then released after the show. Sheep and goats arrived by noon on Thursday and were shown that afternoon. Beef were shown on Friday. Showmanship contests were held for each event, but there was no master showmanship contest. A livestock sale was held in the Kiplinger area with restricted seating.

The important statement is there was a fair. Yes, it was disappointing because the fair board wished to have a display of the history and a grant had been awarded for a display. It is planned to be displayed in 2021.

This board and future boards will need to remain cognizant of the past, have an ownership and commitment for their decisions, and provide leadership and creativity for the fair.

Winners of the 4-H fashion show were Bryn Lampe, Olivia Minary, Amber Gonzales and Bailey Oltmer. Foods division champions were Issac Clayton, Olivia Hughes and Avery McConville.

Dog show winners included Cadde Beeby, Bailee Foster, Kalhe Foster, Carlie Rupp, Rinlee Bloomstedt, Jackson Bloomstedt, and Ethan Spencer.

Goat showmanship intermediate winners were Kirsten Hurst and Mary Ann Macfee-Kassner. Junior awards went to Clara Hurst and Gemma Harris and Leah Spencer and Olivia Hughes won the senior division. Olivia Hughes won both the grand and reserve champions in the market goat division. Leah Spencer had the champion breeding goat and Olivia Hughes was reserve.

Swine division champions were Ellie Seigfried and Eathen Spencer. Showmanship winners were Bryn Lampe, Ellie Siegfried, Brody Hammond, Sam Siegfried, Delaney Crutchfield and Tori Honn.

The market lamb show was won by Leah Spencer and Preston Bobinmeyer was reserve. Showmanship winners were Preston Bobinmeyer, Leah Spencer and Kyleigh Doyle.

Market beef show winners were Braceton Hauxwell and Wyatt Benes. Breeding cattle winners were Jacob O'Dea and Braceton Hauxwell. Beef showmanship honors went to Braceton Hauxwell, Hayden Uerling, Grant Ruggles, Wesley Benes, Allison Rippe and Jacob O'Dea.

Poultry show champions were Leah Spencer (2), Zackary Ryan (3) and Gage Hammond. Showmanship awards went to Alexander Lashley, Jackson Bloomstedt, Brady Hammond, Ivy Chipperfield, Leah Spencer, and ElsiAnna Rodewald.