

100th



August 23 - 24 - 25 - 26, 1973

# WAUPACA COUNTY FAIR, INC.

P.O. Box 37

WEYAUWEGA, WIS. 54983

DIRECTORS: FRANCIS J. FLEASÉ, President EDGAR STILLMAN, Vice President  
GORDON BRATZ, Secretary DENNIS SEXTON, Treasurer  
THEO RASCHKE, LESTER ANDERSON, JOE L. WALKER  
GORDON KADOLPH, A. A. STROSCHEIN

HISTORY OF THE WAUPACA COUNTY FAIR

by

FRANK HAFFNER

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### HISTORY OF THE WAUPACA COUNTY FAIR

#### 1873

The first fair in Waupaca County was held in the City of Waupaca in the summer of 1873 on lots in the city, corner of Royalton and Churchill streets and sponsored by County Judge M.H. Ogden and C.M. Churchill.

The first fair was very successful. Good weather and a very good year for the farmers in the surrounding area. This writers father exhibited his horse at that time. Mr. Churchill was a horse lover, and had a race track of his own.

Plans were made by Mr. Ogden and Mr. Churchill to hold another Farmers Fair the following year, 1874. It proved very unsuccessful and the promoters were very discouraged to continue the fair at Waupaca City.

#### 1874

After the citizens through-out Waupaca County learned of this sad affair, public spirited citizens worked to organize a Farmers Agricultural Fair at Weyauwega for the county of Waupaca.

A preliminary meeting was held September 14, 1874. Several town chairmen of Waupaca County attended this

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meeting in the Village of Weyauwega. It resolved that they take necessary measures to organize an Agricultural Society in the county of Waupaca, having for its aim the promotion of Agriculture-Horticulture-Domestic Manufactures-Mechanical Arts, and cordially invited all persons interested there-in to unite with them. Resolved: Person may become a member of the society by presenting his or her name and paying into the general fund the sum of \$1.00 for one years membership or \$10.00 for a lifetime membership. Resolved: That a meeting be held in Weyauwega on Saturday, the 3rd day of October, 1874 to perfect the organization and make arrangements for holding a fair. G.W. Taggart of Weyauwega and W.A. Springer of Fremont were chosen as a committee to receive names of people that wish to become members of the society. The first meeting of the members, October 3rd, 1874. Pursuant to call, the members of the Waupaca County Agricultural Society met at Weyauwega on Saturday the 3rd day of October, 1874 for the purpose of completing the organization and making the arrangements for holding the first annual fair. The meeting was very enthusiastic and largely attended. Sixty members in attendance representing some of the most prominent farmers from all sections of the Waupaca County.

This meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. and G.W. Taggart, Weyauwega was chosen for temporary chairmen and

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F.W. Sackett, Weyauwega, temporary secretary.

The first constitution was adopted as called: This society shall be called the Waupaca County Agricultural Society.

The association shall consist of citizens of Waupaca County that have annual memberships or lifetime memberships. At the time of organization, 17 lifetime members and 100 annual members pledged. Annual meetings shall be held in January, in the county for the election of officers each year, and to transact any business that comes before the meeting.

For president, on motion by voice vote, John Baxter was elected in Weyauwega. First vice-president, Ed Mather, Royalton, treasurer, William A. Springer, Fremont, recording secretary E.W. Brown, Weyauwega, and corresponding secretary F.W. Sackett. All town chairmen that held membership in the society were on the advising committee.

William Reas of Weyauwega gave the society permission to hold the first fair on his grounds, now the Weyauwega City High School location. A motion was made: Resolved; that the first annual fair be held on the 15th and 16th days of October 1874.

J.A. Mathews, A.J. Van Epps and John Bongesser were appointed as a committee to prepare the grounds.

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The executive committee met in Weyauwega, October 6th and prepared a premium list, and rules of same.

- |                    |                                     |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Division 1 Horses  | Division 5 Farm and Garden          |
| Division 2 Cattle  | Division 6 Dairy and Household      |
| Division 3 Sheep   | Division 7 Fruit                    |
| Division 4 Poultry | Division 8 Fancy Work and Fine Arts |
|                    | Division 9 Mechanical               |

Premiums were paid from receipts of the fair and in case receipts were insufficient to make full payment, the amount paid was pro-rated. The financial report for the 1874 fair read as follows:

<u>Receipts</u>		<u>Disbursements</u>	
From memberships	\$132.00	For premiums	\$211.00
From admissions	183.25	For fair expense	<u>141.79</u>
For subscriptions	32.25		352.79
For cash advance to pay premiums	<u>5.29</u>		
	352.79		

Admission to the grounds during the fair was 40 cents for season tickets and 25 cents for one days admission for non-exhibitors as well as exhibitors. The price for children was 15 cents for one days admission or 25 cents for a season ticket. No charge was made for entering exhibits.

County Judge, M.H. Ogden and C.M. Churchill, the promoters of the fair each took a life membership in the Waupaca County Agricultural Society at that time.

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### 1875

The members of the Waupaca County Agricultural Society met at the Weyauwega Times office, January 27th, 1875 for the first annual meeting with a quorum present and the meeting was called to order by president John Baxter. The secretary's report was read and accepted. The treasurers report was read and accepted as read. Officers for the year 1875 were elected. President John Baxter, first vice-president J.A. Mathews, treasurer, W.A. Springer, secretary, F.W. Sackett, assistant secretary, E.W. Brown and the 20 town chairmen of Waupaca County were vice-presidents.

Directors of the society met May 22, 1875 with all members present. Meeting called to order by president Baxter. It was moved that the annual exhibition fair be held at Weyauwega, October 7-8-9, 1875. Carried unanimously.

A committee of 63 members of the society was named to select a location to hold the 1875 exhibition. A committee was selected to make up a premium list and changes to be made there-in where necessary. The motions were carried.

The committee of grounds reported of a proposition of the Leisner Society stating they would lease their grounds to the Waupaca County Agricultural Association for a 10 year period. This proposition was laid on the table for

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one week on motion to adjourn to meet on the following Saturday to take action on premiums list and printing of the same.

Directors met May 29, 1875 and the meeting was called to order by J. Baxter, president. On motion, W.H. Waterhouse was elected chief Marshal. Proposition of the Leisner Society in regard to the use of their grounds for annual exhibitions for a period of 10 years was rejected and purchase of land for the society's use was in order. A contract was then made with January Carpenter for a piece of land situated east of the Weyauwega Village. Price was \$200.00 and this proposition was accepted and the committee was instructed to obtain a deed for same. This tract of ground was around 12.5 acres. The grounds were prepared for holding the 1875 fair. The executive committee asked for bids to set up an eating stand. There were six bidders, high bidder was \$36.00 and bids were closed. Reports showed the 1875 exhibition was a big success.

### 1876

At the annual meeting of 1876, held the 12th of January, the secretary gave the financial report of the fair held in October of 1875. On motion, all officers re-elected for another year. On motion, the officers took charge of the fair grounds and were to supervise all im-

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provements and the erection of all necessary buildings. A motion was made not to cut or molest any live standing trees on the fair grounds and it was resolved that the fair be held October 5-6-7th, 1876.

A board meeting was held March 4th, 1876 to select three judges for each department in the 1875 premiums list for the 1876 fair. Moved and carried that the building committee build an exhibition building. This same building in later years has served the 4H clubs and is still standing. Horse and cattle sheds were built along the south side of the grounds, answering two purposes; a shelter for the animals and an enclosure for the grounds. Balance of the enclosure for the grounds was a high wood fence. After the year 1900, the annual county fair was held in the month of September, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile race track was built for racing horses. Charlie Gibson was named the manager of the horse racing program and official starter and judge for many years at the races. Horse racing was a great event in those years. The first grand stand was built in 1902 seating about 200 people.

### 1878

In 1878 the society adopted a new constitution containing 17 articles. Changes were made by majority vote, that all life membership certificates be turned in to the secretary of the society and receive certificate stock. As



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years went on, the Waupaca County Fair grew larger year by year and the financial reports were printed in the county news papers.

### 1879

In 1879 there were 52 stock holders listed and 52 one year members by paying the treasurer \$1.00 annually.

### 1900

Old records show that the total receipts for the fair were \$2887.04 for the year 1900 and paid premiums to exhibitors was \$785.75. Three hundred dollars was paid for special entertainment, \$1013.00 on speed and improvement of the fair grounds was \$332.00. The late A.T. Hutchinson was secretary and manager at that time.

### 1906

In 1906, the report showed receipts were \$4483.00, total disbursements; \$2276.00 premiums, attractions including horse racing \$591.00

### 1910

Total receipts in 1910 with H.W. Glock secretary, were \$5853.00. Paid out for premiums, \$1866.00, speed contest \$1145.00 and general fair expense was \$1100.00. Improvements totalled \$300.00 A woven wire fence was built by the late John Richter, partly surrounding the fair grounds, for a share in the association for his labor as he owned wire fence machinery for the job.

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After Glock gave his report, the stockholders in 1910 attending this annual meeting gave him a rising vote of thanks for the good job he did as secretary and manager of the society, and he was re-elected by a unanimous ballot of the society.

### 1912

It was moved and seconded to give all school children in Waupaca County a free ticket to attend the fair, and tickets were to be distributed by the Waupaca County Superintendent of Schools. Motion carried.

### 1913

In 1913, the hay was shipped in from Marathon County for the fair because it was a very dry year. September 2-3-4-5th were the days selected for the fair. Every county board member was made honorary vice-president and members of executive board. Secretary's office was built in 1913 and is still in use as information office.

### 1914

In 1914, Henry Reif was elected president, H.W. Glock was re-elected secretary by a unanimous ballot. A.I. Riech was elected to fill board vacancy. It appears that at the years end, money had to be borrowed to balance the books.

### 1915

The first air plane was contracted to give 2 flights each day of the fair for four days, for the sum of \$500.00.

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Total receipts were \$15,377.00 and records show that the north addition of 14 acres of land joining the fair grounds was purchased to be used by the fair association and a new  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile race track was built and fenced.

### 1916

The old grandstand was moved from the north to the south side of the race track and an addition built on each end and a frame barn for race horses was also built. Motion carried to raise price of stock certificate from \$15.00 to \$30.00.

### 1917

Wages were set to pay all labor working on grounds \$2.00 per day with dinner during the fair. Total receipts were \$9604.00, the grand stands were taken out and all the materials saved. The new grand stands were built from the lumber of the old ones at a cost of \$2375.00. A cow stable was erected on the south side of the grounds 36 X 150 feet and cost of \$455.00 A merry-go-round was also purchased.

### 1920

In 1920, the executive committee discussed a plan to hold a night fair, but no action was taken or dates set for holding the fair. No records of the fair other than the total receipts, which were \$11393.00 and total disbursements were \$11564.00.

### 1921

In 1921, it was decided that a larger exposition build-

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ing was needed. Julius Stroschein was conferred with regarding this matter. On March 31, 1921, a tract of land was leased from Devell Clark for a clay race track for the sum of \$300.00 on a 30 year lease. A lease from the Waupaca County was read of the land the county purchased for association for 99 years without any rental cost.

### 1922

In 1922, a revised constitution and by-laws were presented and adopted. By the new constitution, directors were elected at the first meeting.

### 1923

No report found except a treasurers report. Total receipts for that year were \$20,380.00.

### 1925

The first evening grandstand shows were held with several acts to be given and fireworks on the closing of the two evening shows. A mortgage was obtained from the Farmers and Merchants Bank for \$5,000.00 on all Waupaca County Agricultural Association property.

### 1928

A special meeting was held in regard to issuance of bonds to finance the fair association. There were 35 stockholders present and 27 represented by proxy. The subject was put in the hands of a committee of 3 to act with the board of directors. Bonds were sold in the name

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of Waupaca County Agricultural Society for the total amount of \$5,000.00 bearing 5% interest. Total receipts for the 1928 fair were \$20,933.26 and total disbursements were \$20,899.56

### 1938

Due to financial condition of the Waupaca County Agricultural Society, it was moved to sell the grounds and improvements to Waupaca County, with the county to take over all liabilities. The motion was seconded, and the motion was carried.

### 1939

Due to lack of proper records over a period of several years, a meeting was called in November, 1939 and it was found that a deficiency of \$4,000.00 local accounts payable and no funds to settle these accounts. The Waupaca County board was asked to take over these accounts, but the proposition was turned down by the county board.

### 1940

In 1940, a representative of Wisconsin Music Corporation of Milwaukee met with the board. He presented the board with a picture of his 20 girl revue that he would bring to our fair in August for two shows a day for the sum of \$1,000.00. The fair board was pleased with his proposal, but advised it was more than they could pay.

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The agent came down \$100.00 and after discussing the deal, the agent then invited the secretary to meet with him in a private room and said if the secretary could convince the rest of the board to accept his price he would compensate the secretary with \$100.00. It was refused by the secretary, and the two men re-joined the rest of the board. The secretary made the offer of \$500.00 for the show as presented. The representative agreed and a contract was signed. (Ray Hutchinson says Frank is a Damn Jew.)

### 1943

Entertainment for the 1943 fair consisted of Patsy Montana and Gettero War Dog Show. The board called the Clintonville Four Wheel Drive Automobile Company to see if they would like to display some of the equipment that is manufactured by the company. They were very cooperative. They sent down six different sized trucks they manufactured and also sent the first four wheel drive automobile they made. A check for \$1500.00 was received by the board by the Four Wheel Automobile Company with thanks.

### 1944

In 1944, Carnival Man Billie Gause had sold his rides and all of his equipment, so the secretary contacted Mr. Bodart from Sawano and a new contract was signed for

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carnival rides for the fair to be held in September of 1944.

### 1945-1946

In February, 1946, a wind storm blew down the big cattle barn. Frank Haffner was a county board member at that time and reported what happened. There was \$30,000.00 appropriation made by the Waupaca County board, 1945 meeting to build a grand stand in 1946, but it could not be built because of the war. Charles Larson, county highway commissioner and Frank had an interview with the Clintonville Four Wheel Drive Company to see if the county could get steel material to build new cattle barns on the fair grounds. A resolution was presented to the county board to take \$10,000.00 of the \$30,000.00 grand stand appropriation for new steel cattle barns. Forty-one county board members voted yes and six no. The barns were built in time for the 1946 fair. Erv Schmallerberg of Bear Creek, was in charge of the construction. Also for the 1946 fair, the man who helped raise the flag at Iwo Jima was to come and make an appearance.

### 1948

In the summer of 1948, the present grandstand of all concrete was erected for a total cost of \$29,878.00. Erv Schmallerberg and crew of Bear Creek did the work and it

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was completed in time for the State of Wisconsin Centennial Parade for Waupaca County and Fair in 1948. As Waupaca County celebrated its 100th year, and the Waupaca County Agricultural Association celebrated its Diamond Jubilee, plans to combine the two events were made along with the Waupaca County Centennial Committee. Net profit was \$2,245.68 for the 1948 fair.

### 1950

A cyclone struck the area the day after the close of the 1950 fair and did some damage to the grounds and buildings. Fortunately, the fair was over or some lives may have been lost.

In 1960 it was decided to move the dates of the fair up into August. Up until this time they were always held in September and it was felt that by having an earlier date the attendance would be increased and the event would not conflict with heavy farm work that is normal in September.

In 1970 the By-laws were revised and all memberships re-called. New non-transferable memberships were issued and there are now 118 stockholders. Stock may be purchased at \$30.00 per share. Incorporation papers, drawn up and filed after the 1969 Annual Meeting, went into effect and the name was changed to the Waupaca County Fair, Incorporated.



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The racing program had failed to attract the crowds of years past and it was no longer financially feasible to carry on. Old-timers can tell you of some stirring races and, hopefully, they may one day become a popular attraction again. Demolition Derbys, Stock car and Motorcycle races have proven to be what the spectator wants to see.

In 1972, and again in this year of 1973, more space has been added to Machinery Row, making a total of 100,000 square feet of outdoor display area, all well lighted and with black-top roadways.

The new Youth Building, erected in the summer of 1973, is a wonderful asset and an attractive building. Our fair is primarily a Youth fair and we are especially happy to have this building provided for their use. This was made possible through the co-operation of the County, the Educational and Agricultural Committee, the 4-H Leaders Association and a \$15,000.00 contribution from the Waupaca County Fair, Inc. The old Youth Building has been converted into additional display area, giving us a total of 6,200 square feet of inside space. All available space, both inside and outside, is occupied with a variety of displays. Entries have also increased each year and should top 10,000 for this Centennial Fair.

Throughout the years there have been many changes and improvements made, and you can rest assured that there are plans for the future to make for a bigger and even better fair. Our fairs have survived through fair weather and foul, through wars and depression, until now the Waupaca County Fair ranks as one of the best in the State of

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Wisconsin. All this has come about because of the dedication and services of many people over this 100 year period -- the men who have served as Directors of the Board, the Waupaca County Educational and Agricultural Committee, the County Board, the County Highway Department, the County Sheriff's Office, the 4-H Department, the University of Wisconsin Extension Division, the competing exhibitors, the commercial exhibitors and a host of others working in several different capacities, all necessary to organize and operate all the facets of a County Fair. Our "hat's off" to all of you and may Waupaca County Fair, Inc. continue to grow and prosper for many more years!