

# Getting Ready for the County Fair

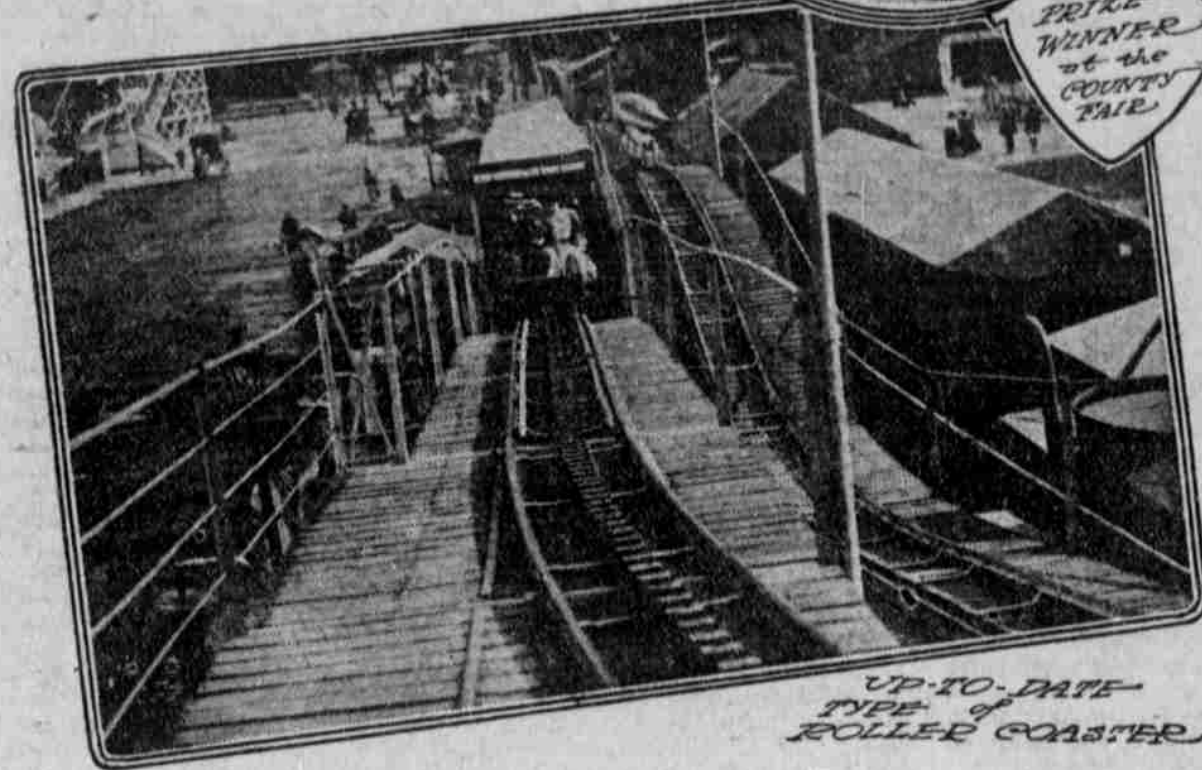
It is a trifle early perhaps you are saying to begin talking about the county fair. Maybe so, if you are looking forward to the autumn event merely from the standpoint of a cold, calm, casually interested spectator. But just remember, please, that there are thousands upon thousands of people all over the country for whom the annual neighborhood fair means much more. They are the prospective exhibitors, and no wonder they begin to plan and speculate and anticipate almost from the time the snow is off the ground.

Indeed, if a person is ambitious for success in the competitions at the county fair, it is absolutely necessary to be forehanded in preparation. This applies with equal force whether it is a case of John seeking blue ribbons for his sheep and cattle or Mary seeking the grand prizes for her cakes and pies and preserves. And of course it is true in yet greater measure of Cousin Sue who has a plot to capture the diploma for the handsomest silk quilt or the most beautiful pillow top—for, be it known no prize-winning piece of fancy work, no more than Rome, was built in a day.

It is a matter of congratulation that the old-fashioned county fair has remained unchanged, in its main features, since the days of our grandfathers. It is one of the most cherished memories of every man whose boyhood was spent within lure of its magic—one of the memories that after residence in the city he half fears to rekindle by renewed association, lest the twentieth century



AT THE OLD TIME COUNTY FAIR IN A RURAL DISTRICT



the venturesome colored boy who pokes his head through a hole in a sheet. The time-honored "side show" or carnival is there with its snake charmers and giants and dwarfs and the fortune tellers and popcorn vendors have the old elusive way of inducing you to part with your coin. Even the fans and badges and tiny flags and "gold" medals of yesteryear look and cost the same as they did as far back as memory can carry you. About the only new things at the county fair, in fact, are the moving picture shows in their somber black tents and the ice cream cones that have supplanted the one-time "five-cent dish with two spoons."

The men who have been conducting county fairs long enough to make comparisons will tell you that, all in all, it costs just about as much to hold a fair nowadays as it did a decade or two ago, presuming, that is, that you "hang up" about as much in prizes for the show and speed classes. Some items have been cut over the expenses in the old days, whereas other outlays have increased, owing to the increased cost of living or some other new influence. For one thing, the fair managers save some money in heralding the fair. For the sentiment of the thing, they still have to make use of some of those gaudy posters in blue and red and yellow that from time out of mind have filled childish dreams every autumn, but they don't spend money to plaster these posters on every barn and fence and covered bridge in the county, as they were wont to do in the old days. As the number of country newspapers has increased they have provided a better and cheaper way of telling the people of the delights of the coming fair. On the other hand, the "star attraction," if the fair management wants to be right up to date and have an airship flight each day, will cost more than in the old days. A parachute jumper or an acrobat who did the thrilling "slide for life" did not demand half as much money, usually, as the expert aviator who wants a fee of \$500 and upward.

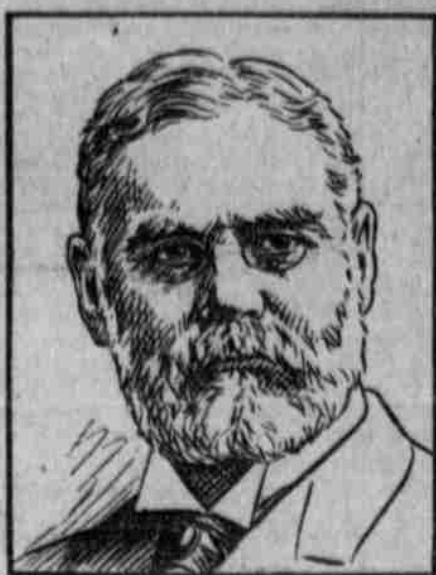
A feature of the county fair that hasn't changed with the lapse of time is the season for holding the event. The conclusion of the harvest, which leaves the farmer comparatively care-free and, let us hope, with money in his pocket, dictates the date of this annual festival. In some parts of the country September is the favorite month for fairs, but elsewhere October has the call and quite a few of these agricultural shows and trotting meets are held in early November. Active preparations at the fair grounds begin a month or six weeks earlier for the up-to-date fair association repaints its buildings each summer and has everything spick and span for the three or four day attraction.

## The Old Order Changeth

A critic declared that twentieth century people tell their private affairs much more readily than used to be the custom. If marriages turn out unfortunately the world learns it from the parties chiefly concerned, and what the old-fashioned woman would have called the secrets of her inner life, not to be confessed even to herself, the new woman tells boldly in order to surround her personality with a halo of interest, for it seems certain, if you do not say you have troubles, nobody will notice them. The instinct of family loyalty is diminishing, that clanish sentiment which caused relatives to hide their internal dissensions from others as carefully as they would bodily infirmities; children criticize their parents and vice versa; brothers and sisters quarrel in the street; the black sheep is openly discussed by his relations. No toleration is granted on the score of blood, and as all of us require as much toleration as we can get, it seems a pity so fruitful a means of supply is cut off. Yet, if a man has a brother a blackguard, why should he not say so, just as much as if he were a stranger? There seems no real reason, except that it does not sound nice, and public opinion long ago decided that a family disgrace must be shared by all the members.

## IN THE PUBLIC EYE

### WOULD CURB SILENT ORATORS



Representative Mann, the minority leader of the house, is on the trail of those who obtain "leave to print" their remarks in the Congressional Record and who then intersperse these remarks with "applause," "loud applause," "tumultuous applause," and other complimentary annotations indicating that the house was in a state of frenzy, while "the distinguished gentleman" was speaking.

Representative Mann has been glancing over the records containing the debate on the Free List Bill and the Arizona-New Mexico statehood resolution. He is understood to have picked out one oratorical gem, in particular, that has been made the subject of a little satirical comment on the part of the minority leader. This speech seems to have met a most wonderful reception.

The orator, according to the Record, started off smoothly, but was interrupted by the plaudits of his colleagues almost before he left the post. As the member warmed up, the house warmed with him, and adjectives had to be called into play to describe just where the reception received by the gentleman. The applause, it appears, was "loud," "prolonged," "insistent," "tumultuous," "on both sides" and "insurgent."

A scrutiny of the official reporter's notes does not indicate that the house was in a state of frenzied approval while the modern Demosthenes let flow his burning eloquence.

Mr. Mann has served in six congresses continually since 1897—six years from the first Chicago district and later from the second. He is a native of Illinois and a lawyer by profession.

### CHURCH HEAD AS A WITNESS

Recently President Smith, head of the Mormon church, gave testimony before the congressional committee investigating the sugar trust relative to the formation of the Utah-Idaho Sugar company. For the head of a strong church society, he has found time to devote to affairs of purely secular character.

President Smith has reached his present high stage of efficiency by sedulous attention to business. At 8 years old he wielded a goad over an ox team when the great exodus of the Mormon sect from Illinois began. He worked at manual labor in Utah; he was a missionary to the Sandwich Islands; in 1858 he was ordained high priest and member of the high council. Off and on from 1860 to 1877 he was a missionary of the faith in Great Britain. In 1866 he was ordained an apostle. He has been president of the church since the death of Lorenzo Snow, in 1901.



The numerous and varied duties he had discharged before he was called to the headship of the church had rendered him familiar with every detail of its administration. Besides, he came to the headship by prescriptive right. He was in the Mormon royal line, so to speak. He was a nephew of the great Joseph Smith, revealer of the Book of Mormon.

Asked if he thought it best for a man to have but one wife, the husband of five wives and the father of forty-three children replied:

"In these days of the high cost of living there is no doubt that the average man is much better off with one wife. If a man cannot support one wife decently it would obviously be impossible for him to support more."

### EX-SENATOR 83 YEARS OLD



Recently George Franklin Edmunds, one of the famous constitutional lawyers of the United States and for a quarter of a century a leader in the senate, until his retirement in 1891, celebrated the 83d anniversary of his birth. Although a Vermonter during the active days of his public life, he now divides his time between Philadelphia and Pasadena, Cal.

Fifty-seven years ago Mr. Edmunds entered the Vermont legislature and after a service extending until 1863 resigned to resume the practice of law. In 1866 he was elected to the United States senate, serving continuously until 1891. His name will best be remembered by the Edmunds act, which provided for the suppression of polygamy in Utah and the disfranchisement of those practicing it. He was also the author of an anti-trust law and was the head of the committee on judiciary.

He was one of those who drafted the bill creating the electoral commission of 1877 and was a member of that body. Twice he loomed up largely as a presidential candidate and in 1880 and 1884 his name was presented to the Republican national conventions.

### CONSUL ACCUSED IN SCANDAL

William H. Michael, United States consul at Calcutta, whose dismissal as a result of the recent investigation of the Day portrait voucher was recommended in a report of the subcommittee of the house committee on expenditures, was formerly chief clerk of the state department.



The alleged misappropriation of the state department funds occurred in connection with the purchase of a portrait of Assistant Justice Day of the Supreme court, former secretary of state, and amounted to \$1,600. Only \$850 was paid to Albert Rosenthal, the artist who painted the picture. The committee during its investigations traced to a single voucher the sum of \$2,450. On this voucher was written "for portrait and frame of ex-Secretary Day."

The testimony having showed that the \$1,600 unaccounted for was in the hands of Morrison as disbursing clerk and of Michael as chief clerk, the committee holds that the money was misappropriated either by Michael and Morrison jointly, or by Michael alone.

The mysterious finding of the voucher for \$2,450, which was reported lost when the committee began its investigation, but which later was discovered by a messenger on the floor in the disbursing clerk's office, is criticized by the committee in its report as beyond human belief.

brand won't be the least bit like the old-time event that was awaited with more anticipation than was bestowed even upon the Fourth of July or the annual visit of the "monster and mastodontic united shows." Perhaps this cherished idol of youth may not have been a really and truly "county fair," for not all county fairs can enjoy the prestige of location at the county seat, but after all, that is a minor matter in the eyes of the outsider and no man can ever be convinced that the world ever held a more important "agricultural exposition" than the one at which as a youngster he exhibited his chickens or peddled peanuts or sold scorecards.

That, as has been said, the old-fashioned county fair hasn't been changed beyond recognition, even to this day, is all the more a matter of surprise when we take into account the revolutionary changes that have taken place in other phases of rural life. The introduction of rural free delivery, for instance, has done away with the necessity and the opportunity for those friendly gatherings at the cross-roads store when the farmers who drove over for the mail stole a little leisure in which to swap stories. Similarly a phonograph in every farm house has somewhat dulled the appetite for those periodic concerts at the little red school house, even as the presence on the roads of those zipping, screeching automobiles has knocked all the romance out of those buggy rides in the moonlight when old Dobbin was allowed to find his own way and set his own pace.

Not only has the county fair withstood the ravages of time and the onslaught of modern invention, but in some respects it has benefited by a lapse of time. That is, many a fair of the present day is vastly bigger and better than was the corresponding event on the same grounds a score or more of years ago. It is not due solely to the natural increase of population, either, nor yet to that "back-to-the-soil" crusade which has swept over the land. The latter has helped, however, because it has added to the population of many a rural district men and women who are engaging in farming for pleasure as well as for profit and who enter their products at the nearby fairs as a matter of pride just as a breeder of fine dogs will travel all over the country to display his blooded canines at the big dog shows, even though the prizes would not pay the express charges on the animals.

The automobile, besides though it be in many quarters, has had a big influence in bringing greater prosperity to our latter-day county fairs. The advent of the horseless vehicles and the fad for touring, taken in conjunction with that improvement of country roads which has been going on this past decade or so, has made it possible for farmers to travel greater distances to the fairs. The tiller of the soil who in the old days was content to take his family to one fair—the one nearest home, may now, if he has one of those automobiles that are constructed especially

for the use of farmers, "take in" anywhere from three to half a dozen fairs held within a radius of say twenty or thirty miles. Of course, this swells the gate receipts and it also results in the exhibit classes being better filled.

On the other hand, the motor car has brought to the county fairs a certain patronage from city folk who almost never attended these rural exhibitions in the old days. Some of the city folks are those who have friends or relatives in the country, with whom they hold a reunion at the fair. Others are one-time rural residents who, having gone to town and "made their pile," find that they can come back via the automobile when they would not take the trouble if it meant getting up early in the morning to catch an excursion train. And finally there are the city folk who have neither kith nor kin nor the ties of old associations to draw them to the fair, but who motor to the autumn mecca as a sort of "lark" and who find it quite as novel an experience in its way as the rural resident does to journey to the city to inspect an exposition or a great amusement park. This latter portion of the influx from the city may not add to the gaiety of the occasion, particularly, for the country people at the county fair, but their contributions at the ticket window are well worth having and generally appreciated, for, be it known, the average county fair is conducted by farmers and other members of the community who can't wholly overlook the financial side.

Yet another new influence that has helped the county fair in our time is the suppression of betting and the abandonment of racing at most of the race courses near the large cities. Racing of one kind or another goes on at almost all our county fairs and whereas it is not supposed to be accompanied by betting there are opportunities for quiet wagers, whereas the mere racing in itself is sufficient to attract horse owners and others who love the sport for itself. Just here, it may be added, that most fairs throughout the United States are now conducted on a clean, moral basis. Liquor selling on the grounds or nearby has long been prohibited, in most localities and out-and-out gambling devices have been barred from many fair grounds these many years, but latterly, in response to the moral awakening that has swept over the country, fair managers are showing a disposition to keep out most of those raffles and games of chance which, perhaps innocent in themselves, might have a bad influence on the youthful mind.

This banishment of some of the old-time catch-penny schemes has not, however, so altered things that the man who has been out in the world cannot recognize the county fair of his youth when he comes back to it. He will see at the old stand all the weight-testing and lung-testing machines, the old-fashioned merry-go-round and the stands selling peanuts and sandwiches and red lemonade. He can test his skill, as of yore, in tossing rings over canes or trying to hit