

Celebrating 160 years.....

The Sauk County Fair at the age of 160 years is still viewed by many as one of the best county fairs in the State.

The Sauk County Agricultural Society was formed in February of 1855. A twelve article constitution was adopted. One of the first objectives of the society was the promotion and improvement of the condition of agriculture, horticulture, mechanical manufacturing and household arts.

The first fair was held October 16, 1855. It is believed that it was held by the old courthouse, which stood a little east of where the Al Ringling Theater now stands. The fair was held the first ten years in the downtown area. The fair grew into a success. In this time frame the Agricultural Society decided that it was time to look for a permanent home for the fair. In the spring of 1870 a forty acre tract of land was purchased east of Baraboo. This is the current location of the fairgrounds. The cost to buy that piece of land was \$1,540.00. A few years down the road the Agricultural Society sold twenty of those forty acres for \$600.00. Many buildings were put up and a fence was also put up. By 1890 the Sauk County Fairgrounds was one of the finest in the state of Wisconsin.

Within the last century the fairgrounds and fair has continued to change and grow. It has evolved to include more 4-H and FFA youth exhibitors and more Open Class Exhibitors. In the beginning there were more classes that were geared towards livestock and horses. Now it has expanded to include, poultry, sheep, rabbits, swine, goats, exotics and don't forget cats and dogs. You can enter photography, plant and soil science, knitting, crocheting, sewing, canning, baking, archery, rock climbing, even woodworking to name a few. A carnival was added along with food vendors. Entertainment such as horse racing, car racing, bicycle racing, horse pulls have evolved to truck and tractor pulls, combine demolition derby and a car and truck demolition derby, there was even a bus demolition derby. Entertainment has gone from big bands to include entertainer's such as the Mandrell Sisters, Charlie Daniels, Dierks Bentley, Justin Moore and Rodney Atkins to name but a few.

Over the years some buildings have been torn down due to age such as the horse barns and other buildings. The huge round barn that housed the cattle burned down in either late 1997 or early 1998. New buildings such as the cattle and swine barn were erected in the 1950's. The original fair office was located underneath the existing grandstand area. In the 1970's a new commercial building was put up and this is where the current fair office is now located. New pedestals were put in for electricity/water so that large campers would be able to utilize the fairgrounds. Progress hall was also built. A new horse arena was built and in 2013 a new horse barn was also erected. Some of the old buildings are still standing today including our grandstand, which is approximately 135 years old. There is an ongoing effort to preserve the grandstand so that future generations will be able to enjoy it as well.

The fairground is not only used during the fair, but it is also used throughout the year for events such as, Sauk County Rural Farm Safety Day Camp, Baraboo 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Agricultural Career Day, Tractors Trunks and Treats, 4-H animal training, shows, and events. Boy Scouts Circus Heritage Days. The fairgrounds has

also hosted wedding receptions, graduation parties and camping rallies, to name a few. When fall rolls around the fairgrounds is transformed into winter storage for boats, cars, RV, campers and more!

Looking towards the future with all of the improvements we have been making around the fairgrounds we look to expand camping rallies, grandstand events, open cattle, poultry, rabbit, and horse shows, wedding receptions, graduation parties, auctions, festivals and more!

We also look to maintain the support that we receive from the community during the week of the fair and throughout the year, organizations and businesses such as the Baraboo Lions Club, American Legion, Baraboo Fire Department, Sauk County Farm Bureau, Sauk County 4-H, Sauk County FFA, Baraboo Elk's, and Knights of Columbus, and Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce, to name a few.

Thank you for the last 160 years, we look forward to the next 160!