

LOOK OF THE FAIR: KANSAS  
COUNTY FAIRSCAPES, 1854-1994

BY C. AMBLER

**THE LOOK OF THE FAIR:  
KANSAS COUNTY FAIRSCAPES, 1854-1994**

Volume 1

by

Cathy J. Ambler

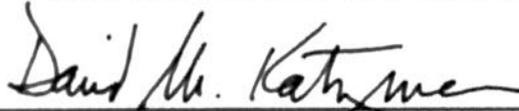
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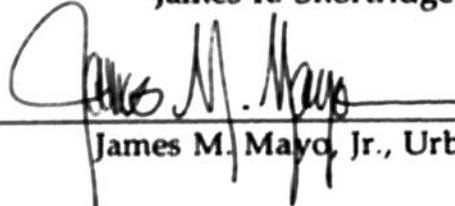
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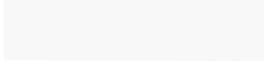
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## **ABSTRACT**

**The Look of the Fair:  
Kansas County Fairs, 1854-1994**

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**Researchers have studied county fairs as recreational, social and educational events, but they have not documented fair buildings and landscapes as visual artifacts. Primary fair activities in Kansas such as exhibition, entertainment and socialization have shown some continuity over 140 years, but the state's fairs have changed significantly from dedicated space with specialized fair architecture to multiple-use space with metallic all-purpose buildings. The community institution of the fair has persisted, but its physical space has changed substantially. This study looks at Kansas fairs – the visual essence of community values with regard to agrarianism.**

**This study is based on a field survey of 113 contemporary fairsites, historical records and nineteenth-century visual data from county atlases, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, photographs, and illustrations. Kansas fairs have had three eras, each with different missions and fair forms:**

**1 Traditional (1854-1900). Traditional-era fair architecture mimicked the 1853 New York Crystal Palace, which hosted the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations. Kansas fairs during this era were associated with local town boosters.**

**2 Transitional (1901-1950). This period was one of redefinition as communities created new fairs more in concert with their interest in promoting agricultural education, the farm family and youth.**

**3 Contemporary (1951-1994). The contemporary fairs are architecturally ambivalent, frugally constructed and rarely just for fairs; they are used year around for a wealth of community activities.**

Studied as material culture, the transition from one fair setting to another enriches an understanding of how and why humans change landscapes. The evidence of visual transformation is different from what has been written or said about fairs. Landscapes are a form of human expression on a grand scale; they are the embodiment of a culture's values regarding community. Regardless of who owns any piece of a landscape, all parts contribute to a greater visual image shared by the entire community. If communities develop resistance to an image, they will change, refine or destroy it to better accommodate appropriate messages; visual images last only as long as there is minimal discord regarding their use and appearance. When visual patterns change, community values are changing.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I was raised on the Great Plains and regardless of where I have lived Kansas has remained my home. I acknowledge my heritage and that I am a product of my upbringing. The plains taught me about distance, and the grid, about moving through space. I learned that I could never get lost since every road ran north and south or east and west. My interest in the visual world must come, in part, from my heritage since this Kansas region is an immense visual experience. One must contend with spaciousness and man's presence in it since the juxtaposition between the two is so obvious.

There are many people who have helped facilitate my county fair research. I was allowed to take a summer's leave from my job at the Center for Excellence in Computer Aided Systems Engineering at the University of Kansas to do my field work. My friends at the Center, J, Tim, Nancy, Scott, Wendy, Galen, Juan and Tony, deserve special thanks for letting me have the time to travel through the state, and for showing an interest in my "other work."

At Kansas State University, Pat Murphy and his staff in Extension Engineering allowed me to use their office's drawings, letters and site plans; Lindy Lindquist, Coordinator for Extension 4-H Events, gave me invaluable information and background for my understanding of 4-H fair activities. Ms. Lindquist also informed local 4-H agents about my research and asked them to help me when they could which provided a valuable *entree* at the local level. The library staff of the KSU archives also helped me find essential yearly reports on county agent activities.

At the University of Kansas, I want to thank Sheryl Williams' Kansas Collection staff for not only helping me find fair information and allowing me to use several of the collection's photos, but keeping in mind my interests. They found several fair resources for me that I would not otherwise have know about.

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The staff of the society's preservation office also allowed me to use their WPA microfilm, which saved me much time. The KSHS also has given me permission to use many of their wonderful fair photos.

I want especially to thank staff and the directors of local historical societies that copied and gave me permission to use their photos: Dickinson County Historical Society, Pratt County Historical Society, Fick Fossil Museum (Logan County), Coronado Quivira Museum and Rice County Historical Society and Washington County Historical Society. Other local historical societies provided materials about their fairs. Many individuals who work for local historical societies are volunteers and they deserve special mention for not only their help to me, but also their willingness to give their time and effort to their local organizations.

Almost every county agent provide detailed information about their fair. These agents answered numerous questions about the use of their fair sites and how their fairs were organized; most provided a current premium book for my records. Many agents found other community members for me to talk to who had a better collective knowledge of their fair's history. I cannot say enough about the help I received. Not only were most agents and local informants very interested in the project, but without them, it would have been difficult to complete the research.

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## Part I

### Preliminaries

## Chapter 1. Introduction

In the late white-hot days of a Kansas summer, a cultural tradition reappears in every one of the state's one hundred and five counties: the county fair. Fair goers spend from two to four days away from their work and air-conditioned homes in a custom that began before Kansas became a state. McCamish, a hamlet in Johnson County that vanished long ago, held the state's first fair in 1858. Fairs survived not only guerrilla warfare in ante-bellum Kansas, but also later wars, depressions, droughts and upheavals. Fairs today are community traditions nurtured and protected by cultural values associated with farming; they have persisted because they have changed with the times and adjusted to communities' sense of themselves.

While researchers have studied county fairs as recreational, social and educational events, they have not documented fair buildings and landscapes as visual artifacts. Primary fair activities such as exhibition, education, entertainment and socialization have shown some continuity over 140 years, but Kansas fairscapes have changed significantly from dedicated space with specialized fair architecture to multiple-use space with metallic all-purpose buildings. The community institution of the fair has persisted, but its physical space has changed substantially. This study looks at fairscapes -- the visual essence of community values.<sup>1</sup>

Studying the visual landscape, for example, shows that pre-1900 fairs were not democratic institutions of farmer education; they were the domain of town boosters and stock breeders. Traditional-era fair architecture mimicked a monumental and prescriptive prototype, the 1853 New York Crystal Palace building which hosted the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations. The Palace was built specifically to exhibit the achievements of a young nation; it had a dedicated site and little to do with improvement of farming. Early Kansas fairs clearly derived their building forms from the Crystal Palace and town boosters used the image

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<sup>1</sup>While the fair is a limited annual event, the fairscape is a year-around visual reminder of the community values associated with it.

to promote their communities because it visually captured the desired cultural messages.

Through the state's business incorporation laws booster groups invested in fairs by tapping their own personal resources. Although stock holders never anticipated much return on their investment, they did expect fair income to cover operating expenses. These corporations produced income in a variety of ways: admission, stall rentals, entrant fees for horse racing and livestock, and rent for midway and pike concessionaires' use of ground space.

The state laws that authorized stock corporations to organize fairs indirectly aided the fairs' emphasis on entertainment and horse racing. Fair corporations needed first a large capital investment to build facilities and then income producing activities to survive. Dependent upon unpredictable income and fickle Kansas weather, most traditional-era fair corporations did not last long. Even if associations did well one year, the next year might put them in debt; even worse, a year or two of rain during fair time could force them to close. Fair associations came and went in cyclical patterns according to attendance or the timing of summer storms.

As soon as agricultural associations reestablished themselves after the Civil War, opposition to booster fairs appeared. Aided by a broader cultural pursuit of morality and virtue in the late nineteenth century, common farmers railed against traditional period fairs as morally corrupt.<sup>2</sup> By 1900 farmers celebrated their status as yeomen, noble tillers of the soil.<sup>3</sup> To nineteenth-century farmers, booster fairs were symbolic of a

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<sup>2</sup>A common farmer seeks economic sustenance in agriculture, in crop or livestock production. Common farmers and their families do the work to produce crops and livestock and make the decisions which affect how and what they do. Their primary interest is in the land and in the process of farming it.

<sup>3</sup>David B. Danbom has discussed the tenets of Jeffersonian agrarianism and its importance to the new republic, see *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 67-8. See also, Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and*

world they could no longer control, one that juxtaposed the achievements of agriculture with the achievements of the industrial world. Entertainment and horse racing seemed only to mock hard work and fiscal conservatism.

As the fair's mission changed, so did the fairsapes. Traditional period fairsapes could not convey the values that turn-of-the-century Kansans wished, so they evolved new patterns. The transition from one fairscape to another resulted in a plethora of new forms as counties worked out an acceptable new look. National agricultural legislation helped along the transition.<sup>4</sup> The transition period was one of architectural redefinition. First it restated the importance of agrarian values through monumental buildings, sometimes as WPA projects or Kansas State Extension Engineering designs, and then it moved toward less specialized buildings and space.

As a result of the transitional era, the contemporary visual space of fairs is less distinctive than it once was; it is frugally constructed and less fair specific. Today's fairsapes reflect character traits Kansans value, conservative traits found useful during times of agricultural stress. Fairsapes still host fairs, but they are less frequently dedicated to that purpose. Fairs share space with swimming pools, tennis courts, baseball diamonds and National Guard armories. Taste in agricultural halls runs toward architecturally ambivalent prefabricated, steel-skinned buildings, which more frequently hold Saturday auctions than fairs.

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*Institutions in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 4.

<sup>4</sup>Examples include the Smith-Lever (1914), Smith-Hughes (1917), and Capper-Volstead (1922) Acts. The Smith-Lever Act established the agricultural extension service to "extend" to farmers land-grant college and experiment station research results. The Smith-Hughes Act established federal support for the teaching of vocational agriculture in high schools. The Capper-Volstead Act made it clear under what conditions an organization might be defined as a cooperative. This exempted some organizations from possible antitrust action.

By creating multiple-use fair sites with buildings used all year, communities have placed fairs in a landscape that supports a crowded calendar of events. If communities advocate using fair facilities year-around, then taxpayers are more inclined to support the construction of multiple-use buildings. It is a landscape that is visually justifiable; it is efficient, useful, and absolutely practical. This is important in an era when agricultural employment is declining.<sup>5</sup>

Studied as material culture, the transition from one fair setting to another enriches an understanding of how and why humans change landscapes. This evidence of visual transformation is different from what has been written or said about fairs. Landscapes are a form of human expression on a grand scale; they are the embodiment of a culture's values regarding community. Regardless of who owns any piece of a landscape, all parts contribute to a greater visual image shared by the entire community. Visual images express communities' values. If communities develop resistance to an image, they will change, refine or destroy it to better accommodate appropriate messages; visual images last only as long as there is minimal discord regarding their use and appearance. When visual patterns change, community values are changing. Values are standards, benchmarks against which choices are measured.<sup>6</sup> Visual space imparts the knowledge and experience of what a community feels is important.<sup>7</sup> It is a formative and dynamic force that helps imprint and create cultural identity.

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<sup>5</sup>In some Kansas counties, 1991 agricultural employment numbers were still significant -- 45 percent of Hodgeman County and 27 percent in Cheyenne County employees work full or part time in farming -- although state-wide, agricultural employment was only 5.7 percent. *The Kansas Statistical Abstract 1991-92*, ed. Thelma Helyar (Lawrence: Institute of Public Policy and Business Research, 1992), 236-38.

<sup>6</sup>Harry S. Broudy, *The Role of Imagery in Learning* (Los Angeles: The Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1987), 37.

<sup>7</sup>A specific example is a community's enforcement of set-back requirements or zoning. The community tolerates individual action

This study of fairgrounds and buildings assumes then there is a reciprocal relationship between humans and landscapes. In this, it echoes work in environmental psychology, which has evolved since the 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Cultural behavior influences architecture as much as architecture influences human behavior. They are inseparably linked, and slow to change one another. Gestalt psychology spawned much of this area's work in the belief that organized forms were not reducible to parts.<sup>9</sup>

Ervin Zube has observed four paradigms of landscape research in environmental psychology and one is particularly useful for understanding the interaction of community and space. The experiential paradigm, as Zube identified it, is the attempt to understand the "relationships of humans with landscapes, of transactions that occur among individuals, social groups and landscapes and of the changes that occur in humans and landscapes as a result of those transactions."<sup>10</sup> As Zube observed, this paradigm incorporates behavior as well as meaning, and brings values and preferences into landscape studies. He argued that a problem in most landscape studies is that humans are only considered as

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within a range of values regarding the way our cities and residential areas should look. Individuals express themselves when they build a house although they contribute a structure usually within a fairly narrow range of understood housing patterns.

<sup>8</sup>Broudy expresses the value of imagery especially well in his monograph, *The Role of Imagery in Learning*.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas J. Lombardo, *The Reciprocity of Perceiver and Environment* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1987), 12.

<sup>10</sup>Ervin H. Zube, "Environmental Psychology, Global Issues, and Local Landscape Research," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 11 (December 1991): 322-23. The other paradigms are: 1. the expert's perception of landscape and visual quality, 2. the psycho-physical which follows the stimulus-response model of psycho-physics and relates affective responses to landscapes with physical measures of landscape where the purpose is to build predictive statistical models of preferred landscapes, and 3. the cognitive, which attempts to identify meanings and values that are associated with landscapes.

static observers. This describes a similar problem in many vernacular architecture studies.<sup>11</sup>

Zube's paradigm suggests that we focus on the interaction between culture and landscape rather than only on the objects in them. For instance, reciprocity of interaction allows the analysis of a continuum of cultural behavior in a particular landscape.<sup>12</sup> Reciprocity also works to solve another problem in material culture studies, its tendency to be particularistic. As John Fiske noted in *Reading the Popular*, the complexity of culture tends to focus our attention on the most familiar things around us, at the "micro-level." Fiske's work is useful in material culture theory for he acknowledged the complexity of culture and separated values into interrelated tiers, moving from the macro-level (abstract and homogeneous), through the mid-level, to the micro-level (concrete and heterogeneous). He identified the macro-level with values that are associated with Western democratic capitalism, the abstract framework of national identity.<sup>13</sup>

The mid-level of culture is critical to this study of fairscales for this level instills the ideals of the macro-level into American life. The mid-level contains the "knowledges and social experiences" that humans gain from living in their culture. Fiske notes that these "knowledges and social experiences" are "deeply sedimented and resistant to change, held in place

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 323. Zube noted this is a static relationship of humans with landscapes and limited to "visual perceptions of esthetic or scenic factors" rather than "dynamics and multi-sensory characteristic of human-landscape transaction."

<sup>12</sup>Rhys Isaac, for example, used architecture to discover the reciprocal relationships of buildings in Anglo-American and Afro-American worlds. In a dual society with a distinct barrier between races, architecture and landscapes taught the appropriateness of separation. *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988), 351-54.

<sup>13</sup>John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 186-89. While there is no one national identity, *per se*, Fiske's hierarchy is useful for describing such abstract yet important values.

as they are by their close connection with the macro-level."<sup>14</sup> The experience and knowledge we obtain from the world as children, for example, have a formative force in creating human identity. As Fiske has noted, this force imprints deeply, yet, in a reciprocal relationship, change occurs over time; in fact, change is integral to the process.

Studying architecture from the mid-level requires the researcher to consider why and how change occurs. Reciprocity compels a researcher to consider broad cultural issues and patterns of human behavior. In probing human landscape and architectural patterns, changes can occur so slowly that it is difficult to see them within a single generation. The subject material also tends to be more general, centralized, and unobtrusively instilled and attached to the researcher's cognitive awareness of the world. Finding appropriate examples of material culture to probe this mid-level requires careful consideration. Architecture is particularly useful, but requires some new approaches. It is infrequently analyzed for its formative power since we are conditioned by architecture's message from childhood. It is difficult to read because we take it for granted.

Fiske's micro-level of culture is the culture of everyday things. At this level the relationship of humans to material culture varies greatly, where one man's trash is another's treasure. It also helps explain why object-oriented research causes problems in material culture studies, and why it is harder to associate micro-level studies with problems and tensions that persistently affect American life.

Figure 1 shows a synthesis of Fiske's cultural level approach and the environmental psychology paradigm. To this I add the influence of important societal conditions such as political climate, demographic changes, technology evolution, economic conditions, value institutionalization, and work and leisure patterns that affect the synthesis of interaction. Societal conditions such as new technologies influence macro-level values as well as the material expression of these values in

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 187.

architecture. Although mid-level changes occur slowly, they also affect the values at the macro-level (such as agrarianism), which affect societal conditions. It is a seamless dance of action, reaction and interaction.

Using the interaction of Figure 1 as a model and framework, this study argues that over 140 years the changing look of fairscales shows that there are changes in collective or community values regarding agrarianism. This model implies that community values affect Fiske's macro-level and although cultural values at this level may be distant from everyday life and in a relatively steady state, they are not impervious to change. The results of this study, in fact, suggest that concern and esteem for the land and its distribution, ownership, cultivation and tenure (agrarianism) is weakening in Kansas communities.

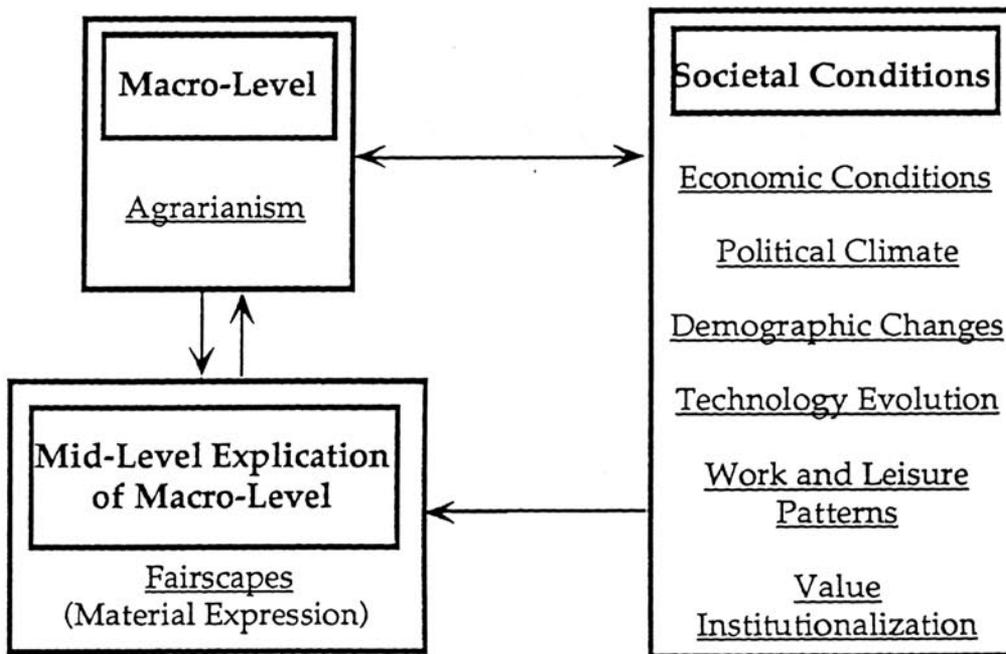


Figure 1. Relationships and Reciprocal Interaction Affecting Fairs.

## Methodology

I used a field survey to document contemporary fair sites. None of the county fairs in Kansas had been documented architecturally before, and so I recorded their basic landscape attributes. I considered other variables that might have affected fairscape development, such as the historic period of a county's founding or its topography and demography.

But what is a county fair? In defining a fair, tradition and law have to be considered. Before 1917, any fair could be considered a county fair, and some counties had as many as six. After 1917, Kansas law recognized only one fair per county unless others had existed traditionally, which explains why today some counties have more than one recognized fair.<sup>15</sup> Another problem with official fair designation occurred in the mid-1930s when 4-H required that exhibitors qualify at a county fair before going to the state-wide competition.<sup>16</sup> In some counties, however, 4-Hers may qualify at unofficial county fairs. Elk County is an example; it has only one official county fair, but 4-Hers can qualify at the Howard or Longton fairs in alternating years. To determine then what fair sites to survey, I used the State Fair Office's list of 1994 fairs. The office compiles a list simply from the county fairs that turn in their dates of operation. Still the field was large: 113 sites in 105 counties with a 1231 buildings.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>W. Rolland Maddox and Lloyd W. Woodburn, "State Aid to Local Fairs," Publication No. 124, Research Department, Kansas Legislative Council, 1944, 61n.

<sup>16</sup>Betty Lou Denton and Merle L. Eyestone, *Kansas 4-H: The History of Head, Heart, Hands and Health, 1906-1993* (Manhattan: Kansas 4-H Foundation, 1993), 149.

<sup>17</sup>The State Fair Office, located in Hutchinson, listed 111 sites. I included two others in Gove and Elk Counties. The Gove County fair was a 4-H fair, which did not report its dates to the state office. By including this fair, the survey then included every county. I included the second site in Longton, Elk County, because the 4-H portion of that fair rotates every other year with the Howard fair; local informants said that both fairs were considered county fairs.

A systematic approach to each fair site maximized survey efficiency and provided a framework so that each site received the same attention. This approach included:

1. Finding the site and determining its level of complexity, e.g., the number of buildings and size of the grounds. This initial overview produced a list of questions for the next step, a visit with county appraiser and county extension agent.

2. Visiting the appraiser's office for a photocopy of a map containing the fairground's quarter section, township, and range. Those documents usually were at a scale of 1:100 within the city limits, and 1:400 outside. They date from 1986, but some counties are now beginning to rephotograph.<sup>18</sup> Fortunately most fairgrounds are within city limits so the small-scale maps provide geographic features and site details for buildings, fencing, and arenas. They also show other valuable information such as the way grounds and buildings are arranged, in "commons" or on "streets." Appraisers also may list building construction dates by parcel, but early dates are estimates and mostly unreliable.

3. Visiting the extension or 4-H agents cleared up questions regarding the fairground or a fair's activities. The State 4-H Office in Manhattan notified its agents of the survey before it started.

4. Photographing every building and the "area of apparent fair activity use" such as arenas, with both black-and-white print film and color slides.<sup>19</sup> These data have been catalogued and indexed. The photos are keyed to match building sheets so any building photo can be found.

5. Recording building characteristics and measurements. I created an inventory form for each building. On this form is list of features such

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<sup>18</sup>These are very expensive and only the larger counties experiencing rapid growth have been willing to update them.

<sup>19</sup>Measuring is a problem when there are no boundaries to fairgrounds, or the grounds are used for recreation. To establish a standard, measurements were configured based on "the area of apparent use." While this is subjective, it is no more so than using the property owned by counties that is allocated to fairs, or owned by fair associations.

as roof line, building size, construction materials, condition, type (pole barn, Quonset, etc.), estimated construction date, and the builder or architect, if known. The form also records a footprint of the structures.

6. Checking the site against the appraiser's photo map and noting any differences. Also I compared the site to any existing historic photos or Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and historical atlases. Beginning in the early 1920s, Kansas State University's Extension Engineering Office produced plans for fair buildings and sites, so I checked these against the current site.

The extension engineering records have helped to document building changes from the traditional period when fairs were distinct, through the transitional period with their monumental structures and innovation in building design, to the contemporary period with its prefabricated structures. One of the office's responsibilities has been to provide designs for counties wanting new fair structures or sites. The records show what sites have looked like over time and changes in building forms. Engineering extension designed at least 128 projects for different counties, but not all were constructed. During the Great Depression, for example, the WPA built only one of the engineers' more monumental plans in Brown County.<sup>20</sup> Their work, however, influenced the design and construction especially of livestock buildings and the move to practical structures.

7. Checking local resources such as historical societies, public libraries and newspapers. The public library usually was a better resource than local historical societies especially for clipping files, fair photos and for talking with local townspeople. Newspapers sometimes had centennial editions that carried histories of early county fairs.

Besides the fieldwork, other resources provide essential insight into Kansas fair history. For example, in 1937 Oral Martin Williamson surveyed vocational education instructors and fair officers for his master's

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<sup>20</sup>If there are other extension engineering plans built by the WPA, the buildings no longer exist.

thesis, "The County and Rural Fair."<sup>21</sup> An advantage to Williamson's survey is that he asked interviewees what were the purposes of Kansas' fairs during the traditional era, and then in 1937. While Williamson's results are interesting and useful, the survey included a limited number of participants and addressed a group that believed in the importance of fairs. Still the survey seemed worth replicating in 1994, for it allowed me to compare his 1937 results with those in 1994. Besides the Williamson survey, I constructed a second survey as a means to check the visual data from the field survey. Both surveys were mailed to the same 111 individuals, with 45 percent returning them.<sup>22</sup>

Studying the laws regarding fairs also helped to document their institutional status. Examples include laws that authorized early agricultural stock corporations, ensured free entry gates, and prohibited gambling. National laws also had an impact. The 1914 Smith-Lever and 1917 Smith-Hughes federal acts, for example, created extension and vocational education and in turn, affected fairs.

The field survey provided good information about contemporary fairs, but I needed sources for earlier fair sites. Visual data regarding nineteenth-century fairs came largely from county atlases, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, photographs, and illustrations. The research process involved a review of the reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture (KSBA) which began in 1873. There are a few county fair scrapbooks at the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS). The archives there also have an extensive collection of early premium books which were useful for

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<sup>21</sup>Oral Martin Williamson, "The County and Rural Fair," Master's thesis, Kansas State University, 1937. Although Williamson claims that fair officers returned twenty usable questionnaires, it is unclear whether fair officers or vocational education instructors provided the survey results; both probably did.

<sup>22</sup>After compiling the survey results, I returned them to those queried, not just the respondents. This resulted in the return of a few more surveys. The questionnaire was sent to fair secretaries on the list provided by the State Fair Office.

understanding a progression of fair activities, and for establishing the hierarchy of livestock and racing interests. They also provided some information about sites, entertainment trends, rides, and the towns that held fairs. The Kansas Collection at the Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas has many county histories that provided additional information, particularly on first fairs. Few counties, however, have taken the time to document a comprehensive fair history.

Farming journals supplied some information about early fairs, especially the *Kansas Farmer*. Works Progress Administration microfilm records in the Preservation Department at the Kansas State Historical Society provided Depression-period building activities at county fair sites. Many counties enhanced their fairs through WPA or National Youth Administration work projects. Extension records at the Kansas State University Library Archive have information about past 4-H activities and early farmer's institutes; the archive also has extension circulars, bulletins, and other useful extension publications from the state and national level.

## Literature Review

There is little state-wide county fair research. A well-known cultural geographer, Fred Kniffen, has written the only nationwide study that looks at the visual elements and evolution of county fairs. His two articles, published in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* in 1949 and in 1951, briefly trace the history of fairs and their diffusion.<sup>23</sup> While he used mainly secondary resources for a history of fairs, Figure 2 shows, for example, how he believed fairgrounds were arranged in the 1880s.

Kniffen's 1949 article offers an initial framework for the progression of fairground changes in twenty-year increments from 1810 to 1949, but his framework is not particularly useful for understanding their visual impact. Design patterns existed, such as the Greek cross and octagon buildings which dominated many 1880s fair sites, but Kniffen did not record them. Also fairs reflected mid to late nineteenth-century landscape aesthetics with winding carriage drives and landscaping to improve and enhance nature's communicative power. Compare Kniffen's depiction of an 1880s fair with the 1887 Topeka State Fairgrounds in Figure 3. Although Kniffen was concerned with landscape elements rather than with their visual representation, these figures are useful for a comparison.

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<sup>23</sup>Fred B. Kniffen, "The American Agricultural Fair: The Pattern." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 39 (December 1949): 264-82, and "The American Agricultural Fair: Time and Place," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 41 (March 1951): 42-57.

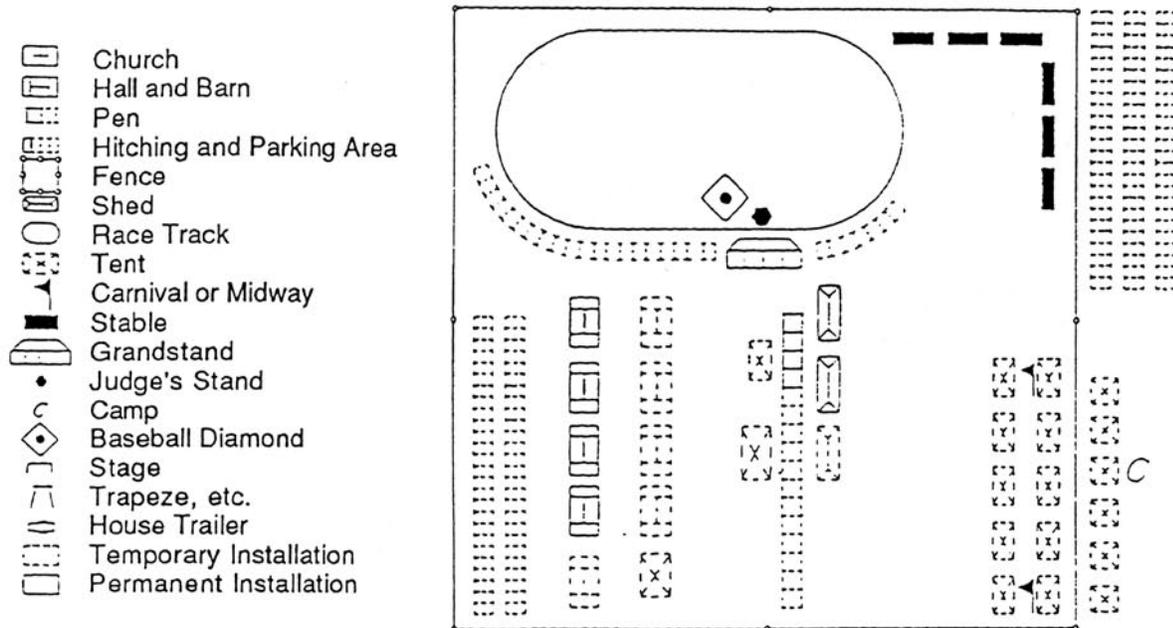


Figure 2. Fred Kniffen's 1880s Site Plan. "The American Agricultural Fair: The Pattern," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 39 (December, 1949), 280-81.

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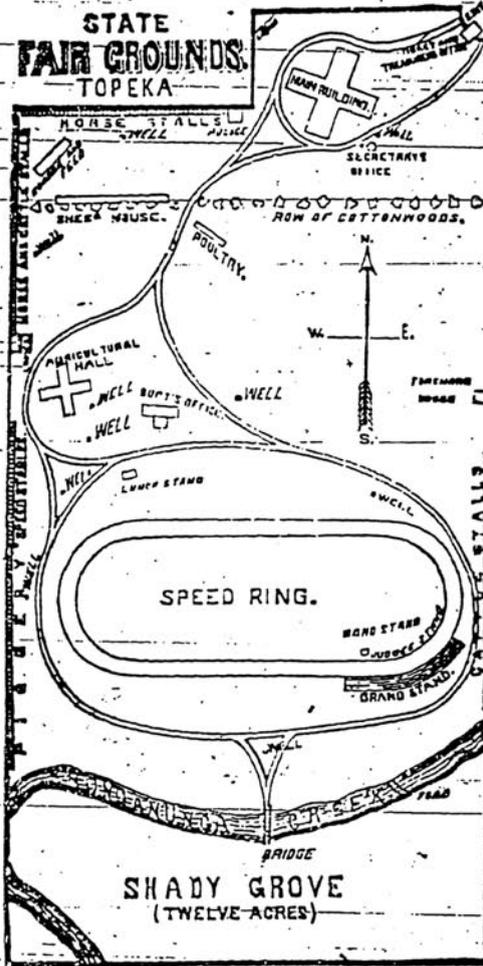
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AMPHITHEATER.

And the Adorn-  
 ment of the

**FINEST FAIR-GROUND  
 and SPEED RING**

In the West.

**THE GREATEST EXHIBITION OF**  
**Thoroughbred and Imported Stock**

Figure 3. 1887 State Fairgrounds, Topeka.  
*Kansas Farmer* 25 (July 21, 1887), 16.

Upali Nanayakkara's dissertation is one of several that deals with some aspect of county fairs. "The Economics of County Fairground Use and the Potentials for Profitable Future Operations through Use Expansion -- A Case Study of the Fairgrounds Project in Emmet County, Michigan," is a local case study.<sup>24</sup> It is an economic analysis of a proposed fair move so a recreational facility could be built on the grounds. His work is interesting because he discusses the visual impact of this fair.

Nanayakkara suggested that community needs and the economic benefits from tourism made a fair relocation possible.<sup>25</sup> Agriculture had declined in economic value while recreational needs had increased. Nanayakkara argued that some communities could redefine the visual image of a community landscape, but when he surveyed county-seat residents for opinions about alterations to the Emmet County fair site, he found resistance to the proposal.

A problem with Nanayakkara's work is that he studied only economic aspects of a community's decisions. He argued, for example, that because there were state and local subsidies for fairground maintenance, community residents were not motivated to change how its fairsite was used. He observed that few county residents understood that the fair site was not being used efficiently so he proposed educating them about the value of such a land use transfer. People would change their "incorrect beliefs" when presented with good economic data and when they could see that the community would benefit from year-round use of the land for recreation.<sup>26</sup> He never considered that the landscape may

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<sup>24</sup>Upali Nanayakkara, "The Economics of County Fairground Use and the Potentials for Profitable Future Operations through use Expansion -- A Case Study of the Fairgrounds Project in Emmet County," Michigan, Ph. D. diss., Michigan State University, 1977.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 78-196.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 195.

have had more value to the community as it existed regardless of its economic potential.<sup>27</sup>

Leslie Prosterman studied "The Aspect of the Fair: Aesthetics and Festival in Illinois County Fairs" for her dissertation, recently published as *Ordinary Life, Festival Days*.<sup>28</sup> In the research, Prosterman sampled county fairs in central and northern Illinois and in southern Wisconsin and studied how aesthetics, or the theory of taste, evolves through an interdependent process of exhibition and evaluation.<sup>29</sup> Although she argues the value of a reciprocal relationship (or as she calls it, continuous counterpoint), between the individual and the community, her work is limited to a study of exhibitions, not a relationship between the community and landscape.<sup>30</sup> Prosterman's research was a contemporary ethnographic study of county fairs and as such, was only somewhat helpful. She was more concerned with the structure and meaning of contemporary fairs rather than a historical study or their visual context in the community.

Julie Avery's dissertation, "Exploration of Several Michigan County Fairs as Community Arts Organizations of the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s,"

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<sup>27</sup>J. B. Jackson expresses the attachment of such landscapes in *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 158: "Nevertheless, we recognize that certain localities have an attraction which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well-being and which we want to return to, time and again."

<sup>28</sup>Leslie Prosterman, *Ordinary Life, Festival Days* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1995).

<sup>29</sup>Leslie Mina Prosterman, "The Aspect of the Fair: Aesthetics and Festival in Illinois County Fair," Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1982. Illinois was her focus but she attended fairs in other states to check her data.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

studied fairs relationship to art.<sup>31</sup> Avery examined four counties and how fair organizations acted as early arts commissions, a theme similar to Prosterman's. She showed that although agricultural interests dominated fairs, the arts were present from the start. Fairs, however, were more complex community organizations than Avery acknowledged. She argued that fairs were democratic in their appeal to exhibitors and attendees, that anyone was welcome and could participate. Her simplistic conclusion that the display of artifacts from other cultures indicated an acceptance of cultural pluralism merited further discussion in the context of world fair research. Artifacts from non-Euro-American cultures were put on display as curiosities to set up a comparison between the "primitive" and the "progressive." Racial hierarchy and progress were themes of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, rather than overt benevolence that recognized cultural pluralism.<sup>32</sup>

At the community level, Larry Danielson's dissertation, "Ethnic Festival and Cultural Revivalism in a Small Midwestern Town," argued that the Swedish festival in Lindsborg, Kansas, is a quest for uniqueness in

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<sup>31</sup>Julie Avery, "Exploration of Several Michigan County Fairs as Community Arts Organizations of the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s," Ph. D. diss., Michigan State University, 1992.

<sup>32</sup>See Robert A. Trennert, Jr., "A Grand Failure: The Centennial Indian Exhibition of 1876," *Prologue* 6 (Summer 1974): 118-29; Robert W. Rydell, "The Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition: To Work Out the Problem of Universal Civilization," *American Quarterly* 33 (Winter 1981): 587-607; Philip Foner, "Black Participation in the Centennial of 1876," *Negro History Bulletin* 39 (February 1976): 533-38; Elliott M. Rudwick and August Meier, "Black Man in the 'White City': Negroes and the Columbian Exposition, 1893," *Phylon* 26 (1965): 354-61; and Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," *Exhibiting Cultures*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 344-65.

a society that standardizes everything.<sup>33</sup> Danielson contended that townspeople worry that their community and its virtues will disappear. Festivals give communities a chance to reinforce small-town values and to present old-fashioned folkways publicly.

Danielson's work tends to exemplify Grant McCracken's "displaced" or "set aside" idea. In *Culture and Consumption*, McCracken argued that "things" (in this case landscapes) can become conveyors of displaced meaning and so are protected landscapes of tradition and ritual.<sup>34</sup> They retain a community identity that protects cherished values, such as family farms that are being threatened by the real world rise of agribusiness. Likewise Danielson argued that by creating a Swedish festival, Lindsborg could displace a unique historical identity and keep it within reach yet out of danger from disappearing. Small-town virtues are idealized and the festival does not require the community to pay attention to the workaday concerns or small-town tensions. The concept of displaced landscapes remains intriguing for it would be interesting in Kansas to see if any landscape could contain such strong and widely held community values and, at the same time, be impervious to bottom-line economic assessment.

Chris Allen Rasmussen has done the most thorough study of a fair, although a state fair: "State Fair: Culture and Agriculture in Iowa, 1854-1941."<sup>35</sup> Rasmussen argued that the Iowa State Fair transformed its mission from scientific exhibition to mass entertainment over the study period and that interest in fairs fluctuated over time. He also argued that mainly businessmen, stock breeders and proponents of economic development oversaw the fair, and that the fair mirrored social currents

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<sup>33</sup>Larry Danielson, "Ethnic Festival and Cultural Revivalism in a Small Midwestern Town," Ph. D. diss., Indiana University, 1972.

<sup>34</sup>Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 106.

<sup>35</sup>Chris Allen Rasmussen, "State Fair: Culture and Agriculture in Iowa, 1854-1941," Ph. D. diss., Rutgers: the State University of New Jersey-New Brunswick, 1992.

within Iowa. Entertainment became a lightning rod for tension over such issues as the decline of youth involvement on the family farm.

Rasmussen's brief descriptions and references provide some information about the visual elements of the Iowa State Fair. For example, *The Palimpsest's* sketch of the Iowa's 1854 state fairscape in Figure 4 confirms that early fair sites had almost no permanent buildings. This sketch shows the required high board fence, main entrance gate, tents, a race track, and animal pens. There are a few small gable-roofed buildings, and a shed-roofed structure that probably housed race horses.



Figure 4. 1854 Iowa State Fairground, Fairfield.  
*The Palimpsest* 35 (July 1954), before 261.

By 1887, the Iowa fairgrounds had at least two Greek-cross structures with clerestories, one with an octagonal center (Figure 5).

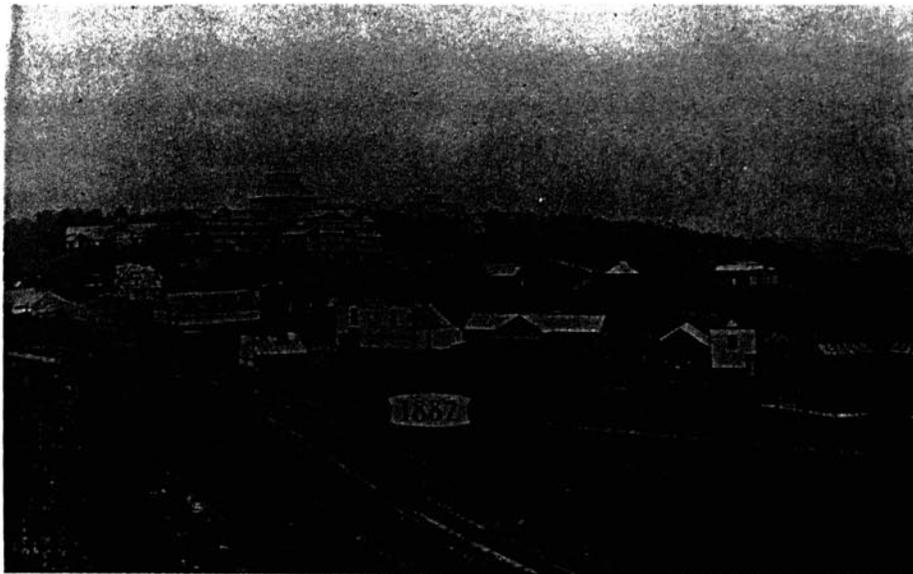


Figure 5. 1887 Iowa State Fairground, Des Moines.  
*The Palimpsest* 35 (July 1954), before 261.

Tamara Plakins Thornton's dissertation, "Cultivating Gentlemen: Country Life and the Legitimation of Boston's Mercantile - Manufacturing Elite, 1785 - 1860," focused on agricultural associations formed by gentlemen farmers in the Boston area.<sup>36</sup> Her study confirms that early agricultural societies were elitist social organizations and that practical farmers saw the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture as self-serving. Thornton also relates a number of characteristics of the men involved in the formation of early agricultural societies and their fairs. They were not common farmers, but gentlemen whose primary interest was in stock improvement and they took their elite roles seriously. They

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<sup>36</sup>Tamara Plakins Thornton, "Cultivating Gentlemen: Country Life and the Legitimation of Boston's Mercantile - Manufacturing elite, 1785 - 1860," Ph. D., Yale University, 1987.

expected deference from common farmers; instead, they frequently were greeted with hostility.<sup>37</sup>

Several masters' theses are useful for this study. Thomas Gordon Jayne's thesis, "The New York Crystal Palace: An International Exhibition of Goods and Ideas," claims that the value of the first world fair in the United States was to introduce new consumer goods. Jayne further argued that visitors who examined the fair's display of objects would receive "not only knowledge of the object itself, but also ... knowledge of material goods in general, of the people who made them, of the advancement of civilization, and, on a cosmic level, of the universe."<sup>38</sup> This is similar to a nineteenth-century belief that nature in the landscape could lend moral guidance and reform the weak simply through exposure.

Jayne's work was particularly helpful because it detailed the Crystal Palace, an important building prototype for fairs in the United States. Jayne discussed the fair's failure, but argued that it had nevertheless a significant cultural impact in creating an intense interest in man-made objects. Jayne's work also points out that despite the financial failure of the Crystal Palace, it was a source of great pride to most Americans who admired its architecture and adopted its promotional mission.

Two other masters' theses provide helpful information on Kansas fairs. The first, George Meltzer's "Social Life and Entertainment on the Frontiers of Kansas," provided testimonials about fairs and what they meant to the individuals he interviewed.<sup>39</sup> Meltzer noted that many people he talked to remembered early Kansas county fairs as social events. The second, "The History of Early Agricultural Societies," by Carol Lee

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 158-59.

<sup>38</sup>Thomas Gordon Jayne, "The New York Crystal Palace: An International Exhibition of Goods and Ideas," Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 1990, 101.

<sup>39</sup>George Meltzer, "Social Life and Entertainment on the Frontiers of Kansas," Master's thesis, Wichita State University, 1941.

Owsley, is a history of the Kansas State Agricultural Society and its booster activities.<sup>40</sup>

*Consuming Visions*, edited by Simon Bronner, contains an important piece by Thomas Schlereth about the contribution of county fairs to developing a nation of consumers, which fairs most certainly did.<sup>41</sup> Schlereth maintained that fairs were instrumental in creating a consumer culture. Schlereth's work at the county level supports Thomas Jayne's contention that fairs like the Crystal Palace were intended to be marketing tools.<sup>42</sup>

The best reference for county fairs is *Fairs and Fair Makers in Kentucky*, written in 1942 by the WPA Writer's Program. It is one of the few references that discusses local fairs state-wide. It begins with Kentucky's market fairs, its early attempts to form agriculture societies and describes the state's first fair, the 1816 Sander's Cattle Show.<sup>43</sup> *Fairs and Fair Makers in Kentucky* provided a background on horse racing at Southern fairs and how it affected fairscapes.

Although the Kentucky history and Avery and Prosterman's selected studies focus on county fairs, there is a need for other fair research. Because they have been in our nation for so long, fairs offer a means to investigate community values within a common institution

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<sup>40</sup>Carol Lee Owsley, "The History of Early Agricultural Societies," Master's thesis, Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, 1947.

<sup>41</sup>Thomas Schlereth, "County Stores, County Fairs and Mail Order Catalogues," in *Consuming Visions*, ed. Simon Bronner (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), 339-76.

<sup>42</sup>Warren J. Gates, in "Modernization as a Function of an Agricultural Fair: The Great Grangers' Picnic Exhibition," *Agricultural History* 58 (July 1984): 262-79, also makes arguments similar to Schlereth's and Jayne's.

<sup>43</sup>Works Progress Administration. Workers of the Kentucky Writers' Project comp., *American Guide Series, Fairs and Fair Makers of Kentucky*, Vol. 1, Agricultural Societies (Lexington: Kentucky Department of Agriculture, 1942), 144.

over long periods, but few have explored the reasons for their persistence and power.

This study of Kansas county fairs, then, is an attempt to understand the visual persistence of fairs in Kansas communities from the 1850s (traditional era) to the 1990s (contemporary era) and how they serve community needs. Fairs, derived from eastern prototypes, have been in Kansas communities from their earliest days. With their enduring presence, such landscapes are, as J. B. Jackson has observed, "embedded in the everyday world around us and easily accessible, but at the same time are distinct from the world."<sup>44</sup> As they change in look, they present new images that convey what a community wants to know about itself and comment on changing community values.

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<sup>44</sup>Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, 158.

## **Part II**

### **Prototypes**

## Chapter 2. Historical Prologue

American agricultural fairs began in the period of nationalism following the Revolutionary War. In 1820 Elkanah Watson wrote *The History of Agricultural Societies on the Modern Berkshire System*, in which he awarded himself the honor of sponsoring the first modern agricultural exhibition in 1810. Watson, however, knew little about agriculture and was not an agricultural scientist or skilled farmer.<sup>1</sup> Instead, he personified for agricultural historians a culturally popular message of the day, especially among gentlemen farmers -- one of progress and improvement.<sup>2</sup>

Elite gentlemen farmers, like Watson, dominated agricultural society membership.<sup>3</sup> This elitism also characterized the agricultural organizations that sponsored early Kansas fairs. As early as 1743, gentlemen farmers formed agricultural societies in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Donald Marti, "Early Agricultural Societies in New York: The Foundations of Improvement," *New York History, the Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association* 48 (October 1967): 319. Marti is one of the few authors who recognized that Watson was only part of a larger movement.

<sup>2</sup>"Improvement" means in this case the expansion of agricultural knowledge about products and livestock. Its use implies efforts to change subsistence level farming practices. Farmers practiced selectivity only indirectly through experimentation. Improvement would be even better known and accepted after Darwin's theory of evolution, for selective breeding fit well within his theory.

<sup>3</sup>Marti, "Early Agricultural Societies," 318. Watson found only a few farmers supported agricultural associations with their membership dues. Four years after the first fair, only fifty-five men in the entire county subscribed money for premiums.

<sup>4</sup>Rodney H. True, "The Early Development of Agricultural Societies in the United States," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1920* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), 297. True, who has chronicled the early development of these societies, notes

These societies proliferated after the Revolution, but most continued to be inaccessible to common farmers who were wary anyway of experimentation. The look or landscape of these first United States fairs consisted mostly of public space. Societies used buildings already in existence, such as churches and meeting halls, and animals were tied to trees or contained in temporary pens.<sup>5</sup> The number of early societies in post-Revolutionary New England grew, however, until about 1819 when hard times subdued interest in them.

The early U. S. economy depended upon agriculture and its expansion. Agricultural products fed a growing population and provided raw materials for the developing manufacturing sector. Moreover, farming represented American values: independence, self-reliance, and morality. It is little wonder wealthy merchants and families aspired to become gentlemen farmers. Prior to the 1850s, owning land conferred a degree of status on the wealthy and affirmed the move of merchants and industrialists away from cities. They could trade dirty, crowded conditions and the vices of the commercial world for idealized lives as country gentlemen. The occupation of husbandman was virtuous, and "tinged with glory" as they supposedly subordinated their private desires and convenience for the public good.<sup>6</sup>

Gentlemen farmers began to organize agricultural societies again in the 1840s spurred by western expansion, increasing mechanization, and an expanding market. Their numbers increased steadily and since fairs were

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that while membership was not exclusive, it was on a *de facto* basis because members were expected to pay dues and often wait so no new member could join too hastily.

<sup>5</sup>Thornton, in *Cultivating Gentlemen*, 149, writes about an exhibition pavilion on the Brighton Fairgrounds in 1818, but does not describe what it looked like.

<sup>6</sup>Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision*, 4.

a major activity the period is called the Golden Age of Fairs.<sup>7</sup> Despite the increase in agricultural societies, common farmers as a whole remained contemptuous of theoretical agriculture. They believed that the societies could do little to help them earn a living, so early attempts to teach agriculture died "like a seed on a rock."<sup>8</sup> Until about the 1880s agricultural societies, farming newspapers, and land-grant colleges all failed to reach or meet the needs of the great body of ordinary farmers who followed tradition instead.<sup>9</sup>

New York Agricultural Society Fairs, or New York State Fairs, dating from the 1820s, provided a cultural model followed by others. The fairscapes evolved over several years based on fair activities and the landscape aesthetic of the time.<sup>10</sup> For example, when the 1842 fair in Albany charged a small admission fee to defray operating costs, entry points were needed. The Albany fair also was well situated at one end of the fenced one-mile trotting course near the Albany and Troy coach road and the Erie Canal, good transportation routes. Figure 6 shows the Bull's Head Tavern close by which provided overnight accommodations for fair goers.<sup>11</sup>

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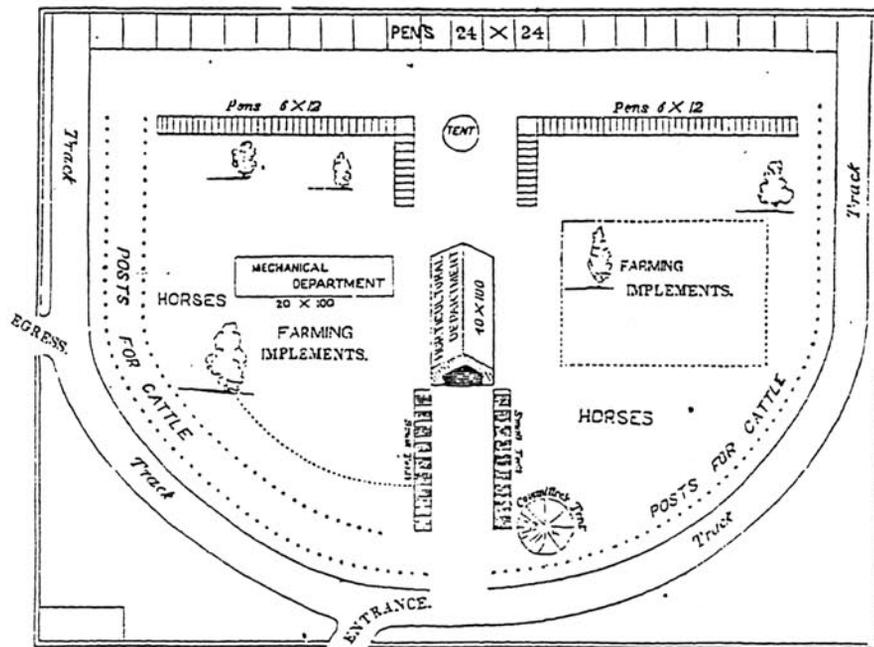
<sup>7</sup>Wayne Caldwell Neely, *The Agricultural Fair* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 77.

<sup>8</sup>Roy V. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 26.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 4. Also see Richard Abbott, "The Agricultural Press Views the Yeoman: 18199-1859," *Agricultural History* 42 (January 1968): 40.

<sup>10</sup>An *Ohio Cultivator* reporter, for example, credited the New York fair as the source for the 1849 Michigan State fair (*Ohio Cultivator* 5 (October 15, 1849): 310). In a *Kansas Farmer* (18 (October 20, 1880): 332), an editor noted that the agricultural fairs of New York were considered as the models for agricultural fairs.

<sup>11</sup>*American Agriculturist* 2 (September 1843): 185. Also see *The Cultivator* 10 (October 1843): 154.



GROUND PLAN OF SHOW YARD—(Fig. 100)

Figure 6. 1842 Albany, New York Fair Site.  
*The Cultivator* 9 (November 1842): 170.

The Albany buildings were temporary tents and pens, and a semi-permanent horticultural "pavilion," 40' x 100'.<sup>12</sup> Sites were situated with such views that they inspired reporters to comment on their rural and picturesque character.

Fair space also evolved for livestock exhibits and for exhibits of the unusual. At the Albany fair one state exhibited a herd of buffalo as a

<sup>12</sup>*The Cultivator* 9 (November 1842): 170.

curiosity.<sup>13</sup> Exhibits of the curious were a form of entertainment despite the attempts of gentlemen farmers to define their agricultural exhibitions as educational and refined events.<sup>14</sup> Agricultural exhibitions of the 1840s with attractions had a hard time distinctly separating themselves from similar market fairs.<sup>15</sup> Market fairs in the United States, for example, had fortune tellers, peddlers and medicine hawkers. Competitive games such as horse racing were a popular part of eighteenth-century fairs. The word "fair" even conveyed this, so early agricultural societies avoided using the term to distinguish their activities and interests.

Another type of fair, caravan shows, included a wide range of attractions such as menageries, freaks, magicians, dancers, and fortune tellers. It was not uncommon in the 1840s and 1850s for caravan groups to work together in early circuses or side-shows.<sup>16</sup> The American circus defined itself at almost exactly the same time agricultural fairs were becoming popular, and so the two combined, almost naturally during the 1840s.<sup>17</sup> The 1845 Utica fair had a circus that attracted many who were not necessarily interested in the fair's educational messages.<sup>18</sup>

With entertainment's intrusion, the 1843 Rochester fairground was similar to Albany's, but was not quite as "picturesque," according to *The*

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<sup>13</sup>*American Agriculturist* 1 (October 1842): 195. The article does not tell which state, however.

<sup>14</sup>Many of these early fairs had distinguished speakers and society balls.

<sup>15</sup>Whether religious festival or Medieval or colonial American market fairs, probably none was entirely free from entertainment. Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*, 5.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 201-2. Also see LaVahn G. Hoh and William H. Rough, *Step Right Up!* (White Hall: Betterway Publications, Inc., 1990), 51-4.

<sup>17</sup>Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*, 206.

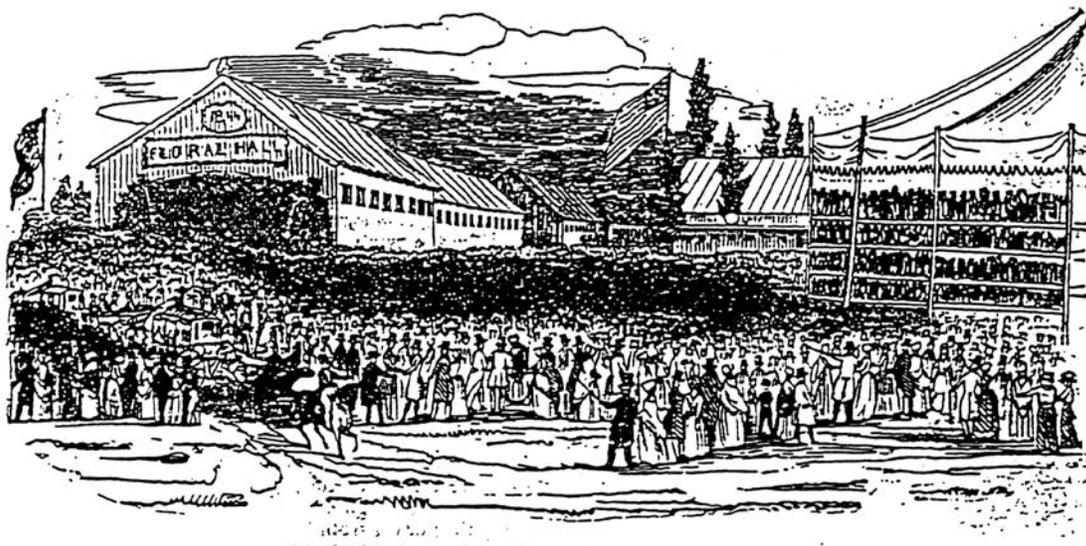
<sup>18</sup>*American Agriculturist* 4 (September 1845): 302.

*Cultivator*.<sup>19</sup> The 1844 Poughkeepsie fair is shown in Figure 7, which is a view of the grounds with its tents and impermanent, gable-front buildings, and in Figure 8, a bird's-eye view of the grounds. A key identifies building and space use. Neither drawing recognizes an area for midway-like activities or concessionaires, possibly in an attempt to ignore their presence.<sup>20</sup>

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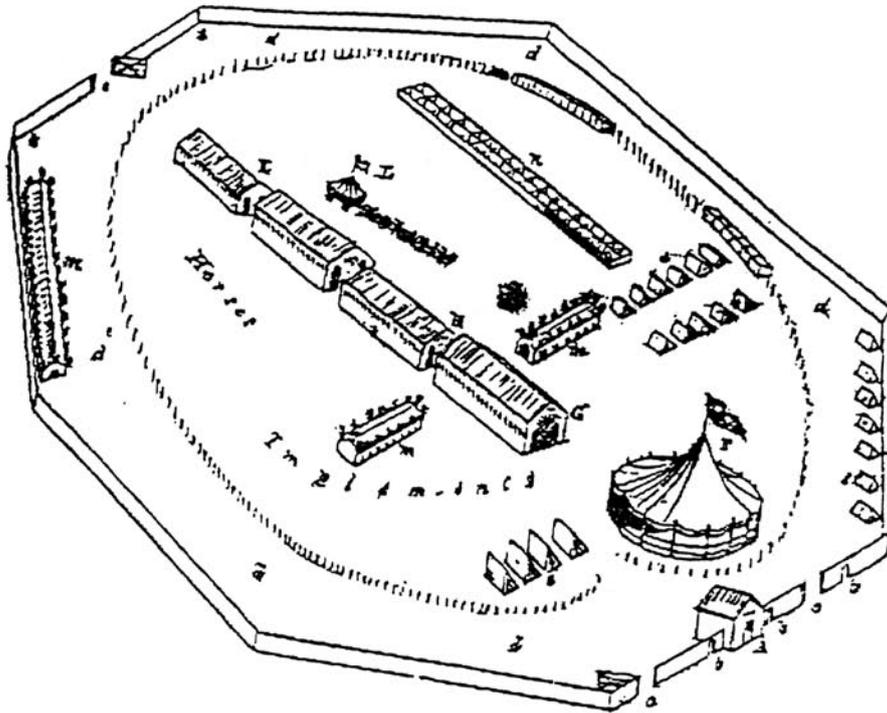
<sup>19</sup>*The Cultivator* 10 (October 1843): 154.

<sup>20</sup>*American Agriculturist* 7 (October 1847): 315. Also see Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*, 107, about midways. In the United States, the midway is associated first with the Chicago 1893 Columbian exposition. In the 1840s, the press used terms such as "tomfoolery" and "thimble riggers" instead. Contemporary usage still captures the meaning for which the midway is famous: the exotic, suggestive, extravagant, and entertaining. The midway has come to mean that part of the fairscape where transient side shows and amusements set up and function. The area usually includes food and souvenir stands and carnival rides.



VIEW OF THE NEW-YORK STATE CATTLE SHOW.—Fig: 90.

Figure 7. 1844 Poughkeepsie, New York State Fair and Cattle Show Grounds. *The Cultivator* 11 (October 1844): 312.



- A The business office
- b.b.b Foot entrances
- c.c.c Carriage entrances
- d.d.d Carriage way, with posts and sheds for cattle and horses inside the fence
- e.e.e Committee's tents
- F. Large tent
- G. Floral Hall
- H. Ladies' Home
- I. Manufacturer's Lodge
- K. Farmer's Hall
- L. Hyde Park Agricultural Moving Temple
- m.m.m Booths
- n. Pens for sheep and swine

Figure 8. 1844 Poughkeepsie, New York State Fair Site Plan. *The Cultivator* 11 (October 1844): 314.

*The Cultivator*, impressed by the grounds of the Poughkeepsie fair, alluded to the period's preference for picturesque landscapes embellished with appropriate ornamentation. Among these tasteful elements were a line of gable-front agricultural buildings, the first measuring 36' x 100' and a horticultural "temple."<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the most unusual element was the farmer's car from Hyde Park pulled by oxen. The cart distanced the women and children who attended the fair from the mud and animal muck.<sup>22</sup>

Although women attended these fairs, how frequently they participated is unclear.<sup>23</sup> Agricultural journals seem to indicate they did not participate much. New York men competed at fairs from dairy farms in the 1840s, for example, even though women were the primary producers of many of the products.<sup>24</sup> Despite the absence of women as exhibitors, one cannot assume that men produced what they exhibited because both men and women might have produced what was displayed. What seems more likely is that men ran fairs, and they took the credit and awards.<sup>25</sup> In 1842 men were still winning nearly all the premiums at the New York State Agricultural Fair, even for silk thread, butter, cheese, fruit and vegetables.

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<sup>21</sup>*The Cultivator* 11 (October 1844): 312.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 312, 313.

<sup>23</sup>Elkanah Watson claimed he was the first to include them in 1813, but his fair was more of a domestic show held in winter. (Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*, 63).

<sup>24</sup>Sally McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life: Dairying Families and Agricultural Change, 1820-1885* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 75.

<sup>25</sup>Women associated with fairs frequently were wives and family members of the gentlemen farmers who ran them. They had the time to create articles of taste to exhibit.

The New York State Fair had its first "Ladies Home" or women's building at the 1844 fair. The building exhibited "articles of taste" such as needlework on screens, coverlets, rugs, chairs and shell work. The introduction of women's buildings occurred as work roles were changing in the context of industrialization. Even "domestic" changed its emphasis in meaning. It is important to make the distinction in the word's use, because when first associated with fair exhibits, "domestic" did not connote such strong gender differences as it did later when domestic buildings meant "women's space" and "of the home." Used at early fairs, domestic meant American-made goods as opposed to foreign-produced.

Fairs exhibits also began to distinguish between factory-produced goods, and home-produced goods. In 1853, the Ohio State Fair acknowledged the differences in production sources by changing fabric exhibit categories. For example, the fair awarded premiums for American mill-produced goods, which distinguished them from European imports, but it also distinguished American mill-produced goods from cloth made in the home.

The 1845 New York State Fair in Utica had a ladies' hall devoted to domestic or home fabrics. Women also exhibited in the floral hall and created three displays: an Egyptian temple dedicated to Ceres, a Gothic temple to Pomona, and a Corinthian-order temple to Flora.<sup>26</sup> In 1846, the state agricultural society added a women's committee to its planning structure.

The Utica fairgrounds were similar to Poughkeepsie's with a ten-acre area oval, but this fair had a carriage concourse that allowed guests to circulate around the grounds. This architecture of the fairscape had four temporary halls -- floral, ladies, mechanic's and farmer's -- each 30' x 100'. There were again explicit references to Greek temples and neoclassical architecture in the several small display structures located inside the floral hall. Figure 9, although from a later New York fair, shows one of these temples.

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<sup>26</sup>*American Agriculturist* 4 (September 1845): 301-2.



Figure 9. 1849 Syracuse, New York State Fair.  
*American Agriculturist* 4 (September 1849): 301.

Neoclassical architecture dominated the nation's taste in buildings as early as the 1830s. By the 1850s it had permeated almost everywhere. It became the first style in American history to be consciously understood and embraced as a truly national mode of building.<sup>27</sup> Agricultural writers throughout the nation used classical imagery to justify the labor and virtues of the soil until long after the Civil War; it helped equate the republic with agrarianism. Antiquity, or the popular image of it, had

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<sup>27</sup>William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Buildings and Their Architects*, Vol. 1, *The Colonial and Neoclassical Styles*, *American Buildings and Their Architects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 418.

extraordinary appeal for many Americans throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

Although previous fairs used small temple structures to hold displays, at the 1846 Albany fair, three of the four main buildings actually looked like Greek temples (Figure 10).<sup>29</sup>

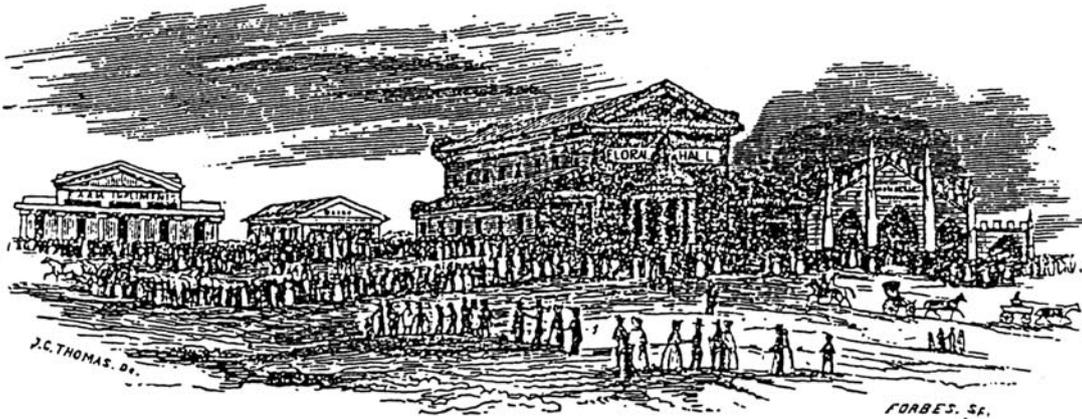


Figure 10. 1846 Auburn, New York State Fair Buildings. *The Cultivator* 3 (October 1846): 319.

The Floral Hall was largest and measured 50' x 150'. It was a rectangle with shed additions and basilica-like side aisles. A clerestory brightened

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<sup>28</sup>Thomas Hubka, *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1984), 196-7.

<sup>29</sup>*The Cultivator* 3 (October 1846): 319.

the interior where central columns were covered by wreaths and greenery. The fourth building, a pointed gothic form, was architecturally characteristic of ideal rural buildings in the 1840s.<sup>30</sup> The fair also had the same floral, farmer's, mechanic's and ladies' halls as Poughkeepsie's fair.<sup>31</sup>

New York fair sites accommodated the entertainment and attractions now associated with them. By 1849, the Syracuse fair had not only a circus, but also "spurious broods of auxiliaries" including a theater troupe, organ grinders and pugilists.<sup>32</sup> At the 1850 Albany fair, concessionaires hawked their goods at a "city of booths." The Spalding and Roger's Circus was outside the official limits of the fairground between the entrance to the grounds and the entrance to the fair, but it had "more attraction for the masses than the sublime, soul-stirring conceptions of Haydn[']s "Oratorio of the Seasons," performed by the Harmonia Society."<sup>33</sup> The fair had "circus riders, thimble riggers, professional gamblers and the whole race of loafers and vagabonds of every hue and description."<sup>34</sup>

The Boston Museum also exhibited at the 1850 Albany fair with its cabinet of curiosities which were similar to P. T. Barnum's Museum in

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<sup>30</sup>Richard Upjohn's church, the First Parish Congregational Church in Brunswick, Maine (1845-46), shows similar characteristics to the pointed gothic fair building, only the fair building has the crenelation of a gothic mansion (See William H. Pierson, *American Builders and Their Architects*, Vol. 2, *Technology and the Picturesque, The Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), page 438.) This was also when A. J. Davis and A. J. Downing maintained that gothic villas and cottages provided the best housing for country life.

<sup>31</sup>*The Cultivator* 2 (October 1845): 313.

<sup>32</sup>*American Agriculturist* 8 (October 1849): 330.

<sup>33</sup>*Genesee Farmer* 11 (October 1850): 230.

<sup>34</sup>*American Agriculturist* 9 (October 1850): 316.

New York.<sup>35</sup> By 1850, the Boston Museum had had a ten-year history of exhibits that included historical tableaux, moving dioramas, and historical battle recreations. Exhibits featured unusual humans such as giants, midgets, the fattest and thinnest of humans, and a show by Barnum's General Tom Thumb. The museum's presence at the 1850 New York fair gave the aura of approval and respectability to similar displays.<sup>36</sup> When circuses and sideshows attracted attendance, community sponsors found it easier to pay operating costs. Such diversions challenged the purpose of these fairs as agricultural exhibitions yet their ability to draw a crowd created an uneasy, long-term, dependent relationship between entertainment groups and agricultural societies.

By 1850, these New York fairs looked much the same. Buildings, while still mostly temporary, continued to reference neoclassical architecture. Fences controlled entry points for ticket booths and carriage drives allowed women to attend and view the fairs. Women's exhibits were distinguished in separate space. Fairsapes were arranged artistically for scenes and views, much as in other period public landscapes. Most concessions still remained outside of the main fence with the exception of those which provided meals (early eating houses or dining halls). There were "rings," or circles for showing animals, pens for sheep and hogs, and sometimes covered stalls for cattle and horses.<sup>37</sup> Figure 11 shows the pattern.

Further west, Ohio started its state fair in 1850 and by 1851, the fairscape looked much like New York's. Figure 12 shows the Ohio

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<sup>35</sup>Claire McGlinchee, *The First Decade of the Boston Museum* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1940), 21.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>37</sup>The word "ring" may derive from the circus. Circus rings were locations where simultaneous events occurred. The speed ring is what we now call a race track.

There is an instance recorded of exhibitors building awnings to protect their animals standing in the sun. *The Cultivator* 8 (October 1851): 336.

grounds with its carriage drive.<sup>38</sup> Figure 13 shows the 1852 fairground in Cleveland and while similar, it is more symmetrical. The graceful curves were part of the accepted rural landscape aesthetic, so Ohio's fairgrounds remained within the taste of the times.<sup>39</sup>

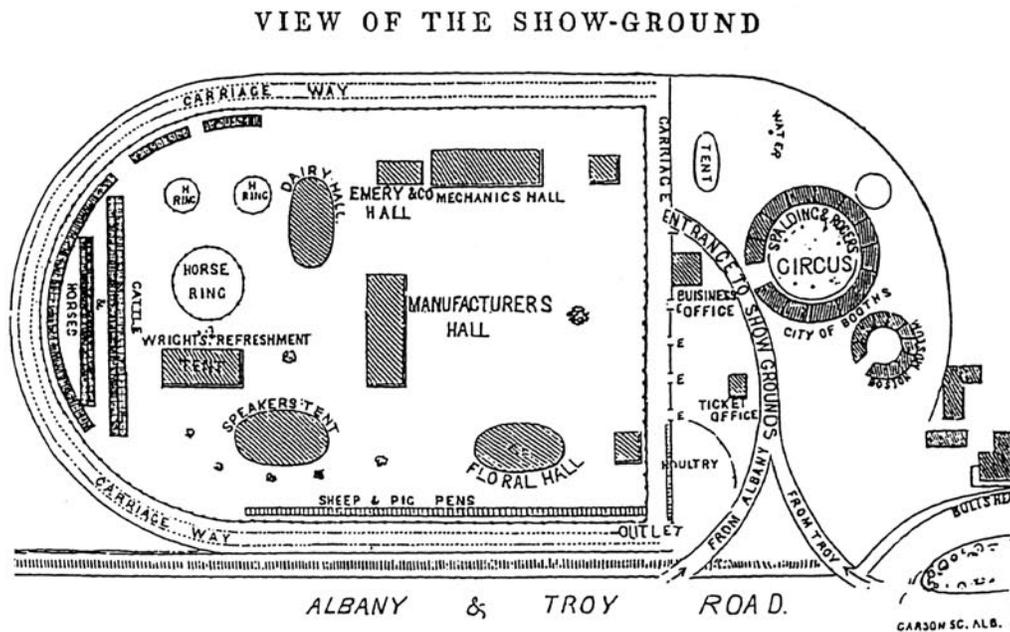
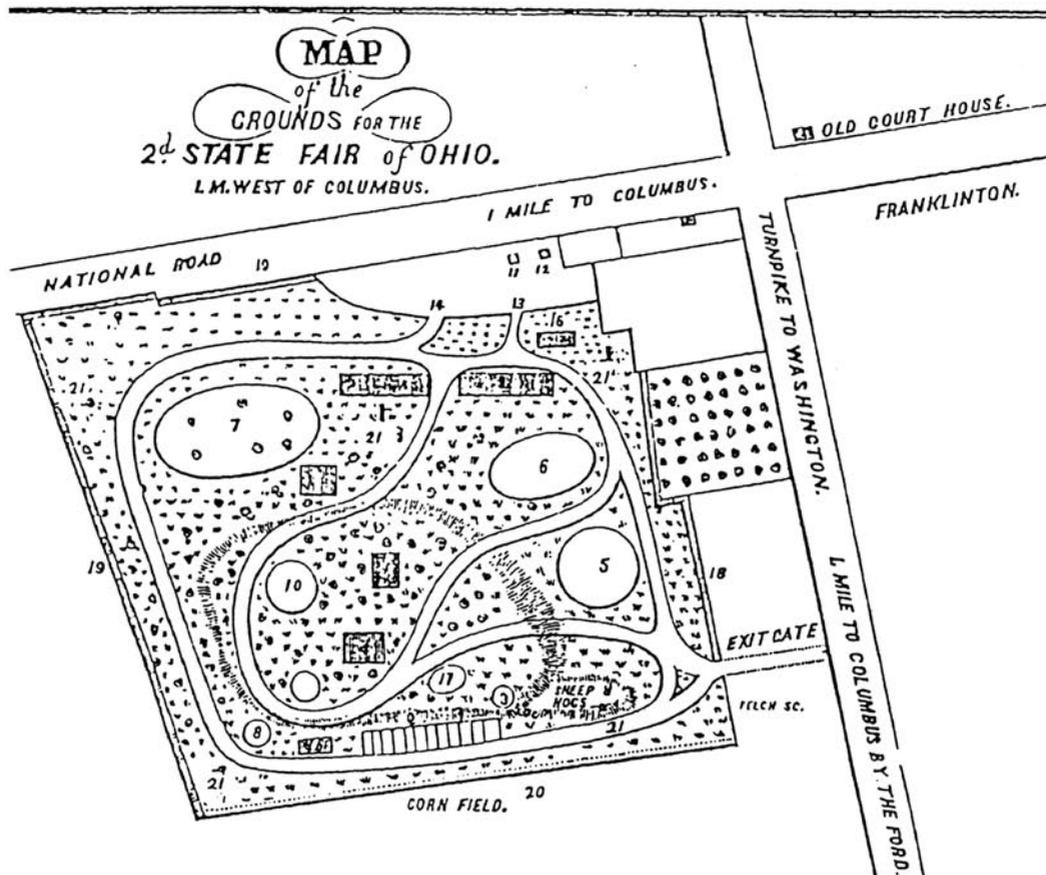


Figure 11. 1850 Albany, New York Show Grounds.  
*Genesee Farmer* 11 (October 1850): 230.

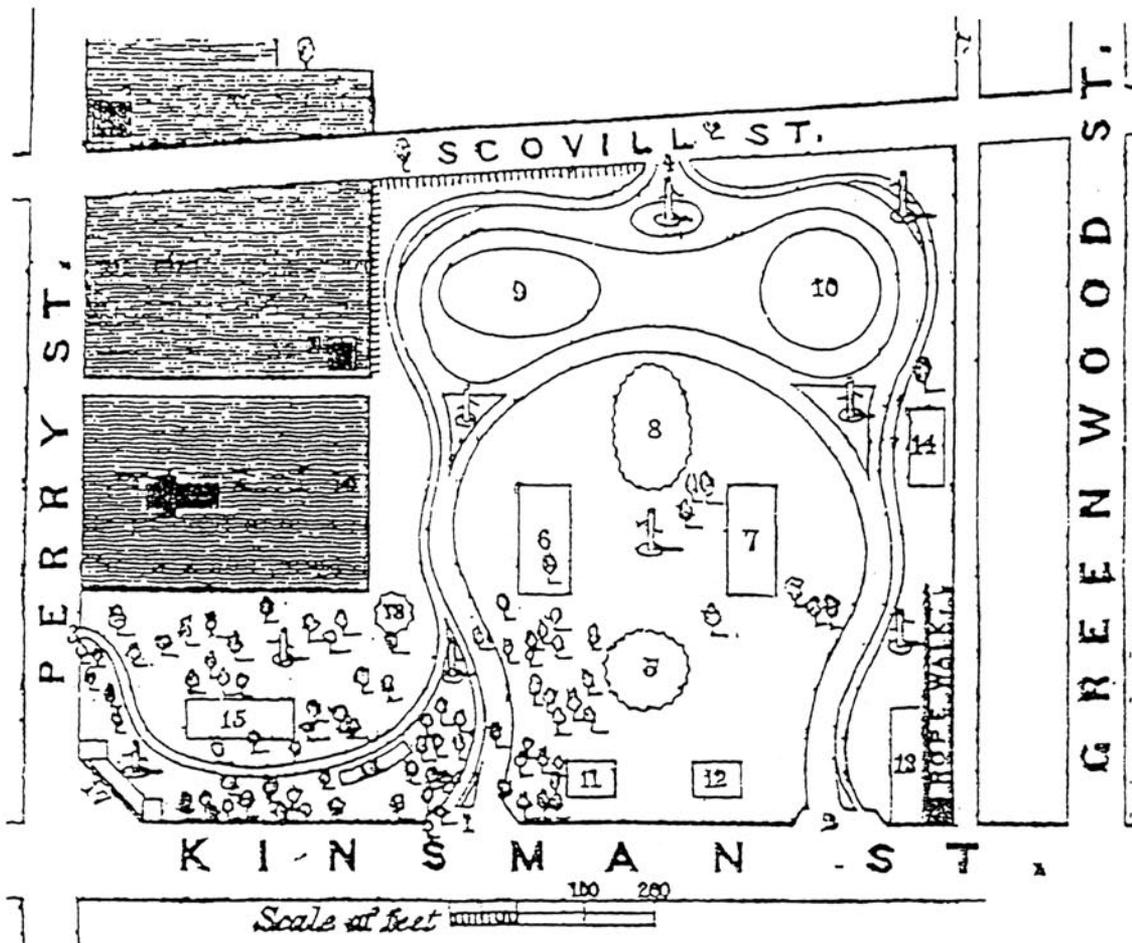
<sup>38</sup>*Ohio Cultivator* 7 (July 15, 1851): 211-2.

<sup>39</sup>David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 65.



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|---|--|
| 1. Floral Hall  | 10. Dairy products, seeds, honey, etc.     |
| 2. Manufacturer's and Agricultural Hall and machinery requiring power | 11. Ticket Office                          |
| 3. Society Tent   | 12. Business Office                        |
| 4. Domestic Manufacturers   | 13. Exit Gate only for persons on foot     |
| 5. Horse Ring (Stallions)   | 14. Entrance gate for Carriages            |
| 6. Ring for Saddle, Harness and Draft Horses                          | 15. Grand Exit Gate for Carriages & Horses |
| 7. Large Ring for Exhibition of different grades of Cattle            | 16. Refreshment and Eating                 |
| 8. Poultry and Rabbit House   | 17. Confectionery                          |
| 9. Pen for Hogs and Sheep   | 18. Cattle Sheds                           |
|   | 19. Horse Sheds                            |
|   | 20. Hitching Ground for Horses             |
|   | 21. Pumps                                  |

Figure 12. 1851 Columbus, Ohio State Fairgrounds.  
*Ohio Cultivator* 7 (July 15, 1851): 211-12.



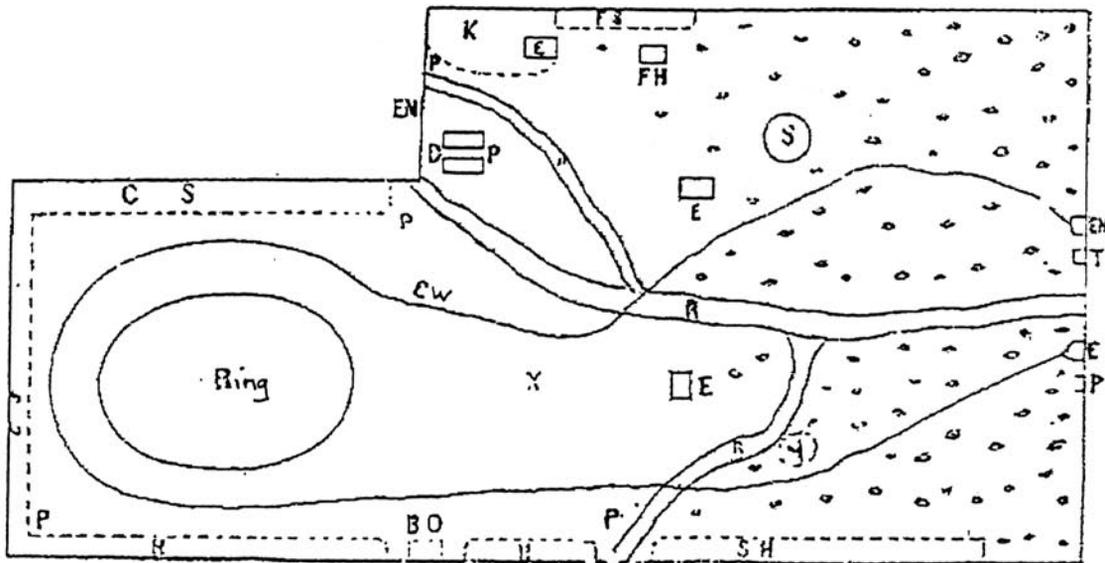
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|--|--|
| 1. Main Carriage and Foot Entrance       | 10. Horse and Cattle Rings                       |
| 2. Main Carriage and Foot Exit Gate      | 11. Stoves and Iron Ware, etc.                   |
| 3. Foot Entrance Gate                    | 12. Cabinet Makers, Saddlers, and Misc. Articles |
| 4. Carriage Exit Gate to Hitching Ground | 13. Eating House                                 |
| 5. Speaker's Tent                        | 14. Power Hall                                   |
| 6. Manufacturer's Hall                   | 15. Floral Hall                                  |
| 7. Mechanic's Hall                       | 16. Chicken Coops                                |
| 8. Dairy and Farm Produce Tent           | 17. Ohio Farmer Office                           |
| 9. Horse and Cattle Rings                | 18. Business, Treasurer's and Police Offices     |

Horse stalls were on the northeast side of the grounds

Cattle Stalls were on the northwest side of the grounds

Figure 13. 1852 Cleveland, Ohio State Fairgrounds.  
*Prairie Farmer* 13 (January 1853): 7.

Illinois followed the patterns of Ohio and New York.<sup>40</sup> While Figure 14 of the 1853 fair in Springfield is less sophisticated than some, the landscape is familiar.



En	Entrances	R	Ring	R	Ravine
Ex	Exit Gate	X	Scales	E	Eating Booths
FH	Floral Hall	P	Police	Y	Poultry
S	Speaker's Stand	T	Ticket Office	BO	Business Office
CW	Carriage Way	P	Pumps	SH	Sheep and Hogs
CS	Cattle Stands	H	Horses, Mules and Jacks		
DP	Halls for Domestic Products				

Twenty Acres, 40 x 80 Rods

Figure 14. Springfield, Illinois State Fairgrounds.  
*Prairie Farmer* 13 (November 1853): 424.

<sup>40</sup>*Prairie Farmer* 13 (November 1853): 424. This fair was Illinois' first. The second was in Springfield also, and then it circulated among Illinois cities for the next forty years. From Illinois State Fair History internet home page: <http://www.state.il.us/agr/95Fair/History.html>.

Although Northern fairs evolved from patterns started at the state level in the 1840s and 1850s, fairs in the ante-bellum South were mostly local social events.<sup>41</sup> From the mid-eighteenth century on in Virginia, for example, agricultural associations were natural extensions of existing social and business relationships. These relationships were defined in important landscapes such as the courthouse. Court days were also fair or market days where livestock sales, contests, games and horse racing took place.<sup>42</sup> Race events sometimes lasted for almost a week and were "occasions for great fairs, with entertainment such as 'puppet shows, roape dancing &ca.'"<sup>43</sup> Around the Revolutionary period fairs were actually added to horse racing events although the racing remained more important than the fair.

In frontier Kentucky, fairs also were important local events. The 1816 fairs, for instance attracted planters and their families dressed in their best. Their sheep, hogs and horses competed for silver cups.<sup>44</sup> Success in

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<sup>41</sup>In the plantation system it is not easy to determine who is actually farming or working the land. Thomas Jefferson and George Washington considered themselves farmers, for example, but slaves labored in the fields. Regardless, Lewis Gray reminded readers that plantation owners were far more likely to be interested in livestock breeding. Gray's descriptions of the efforts to organize agricultural societies shows again that the elite paid attention to livestock interests. Beginning about the 1850s, however, they refocused their efforts to uphold and consolidate their Southern economic interests when the region and plantation system came under increasing criticism. See Lewis Gray's *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1933), 787.

<sup>42</sup>Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 90, 101, 103 and 317.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 101. Rope dancers are tight-wire artists.

<sup>44</sup>Thomas Clark, in *Agrarian Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 37-8, argued that these prize silver cups may have begun the julep-cup tradition, because these prize cups were associated with the breeding of fine livestock. The amount of silver awarded for breeding by associations is substantial and compensated its members well.

displays of prowess among friends were critical to the Southern social hierarchy.<sup>45</sup> Kentucky's early fairs were typical of those in other Southern states; most of them failed.<sup>46</sup> Low agricultural prices, hard times, and failure to pay fair premiums all contributed to the fairs' demise. Kentucky's State Agricultural Society made three attempts before it finally survived. It held fairs in different towns for fourteen years between 1856 and 1870. As in the north, women scarcely participated in early fairs and more often just attended. Lewis Gray noted that it took some time for the "prudish prejudice" against women to break down.<sup>47</sup> In Kentucky, at least one woman farmer found some equity at a fair in 1838 when she demanded and was accorded the right to exhibit her own livestock.<sup>48</sup>

Once established, Kentucky's state fairs were probably better known to Northerners than other Southern fairs. The pedigreed horse and cattle spread the state's fame and railroad transportation made it easily accessible to Northern visitors. In addition to its livestock, Kentucky was known for its amphitheaters, impressive buildings for livestock and horsemanship displays and racing. Several of agricultural journals described them; the *Ohio Farmer*, for example, was much impressed.<sup>49</sup> James Lane Allen described his fair's amphitheater before the Civil War as a high, covered, circular and wooden building with entry gates situated next to a flourishing town and turnpike. Well-dressed women sat high in the seats away from the activities of the track, where men and boys competed in

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<sup>45</sup>Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 86.

<sup>46</sup>*Fairs and Fair Makers of Kentucky*, 59-60, 63.

<sup>47</sup>Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States*, 785.

<sup>48</sup>*Fairs and Fair Makers of Kentucky*, 97.

<sup>49</sup>An *Ohio Farmer* article (8 September 17, 1859, 301) notes one 160' in diameter, seating 8-10,000 spectators.

horsemanship contests and in races.<sup>50</sup> By the 1850s, several Kentucky fairgrounds possessed similar amphitheaters with show rings and tracks; some were two-story structures with promenades. Figure 15 shows an amphitheater in Louisville in 1857.<sup>51</sup>

Whether round or oval, race tracks were part of most fair sites before 1854 in both the North and South. Racing had a long tradition in both regions as a competitive and spontaneous activity that took place at early market fairs and in friendly match races. The natural affinity between horse breeding and racing eventually later became an affinity between horse breeding, racing and agricultural shows. Wealthier farmers attempted most of the livestock improvements so they had the closest ties to the sport and helped to organize it.

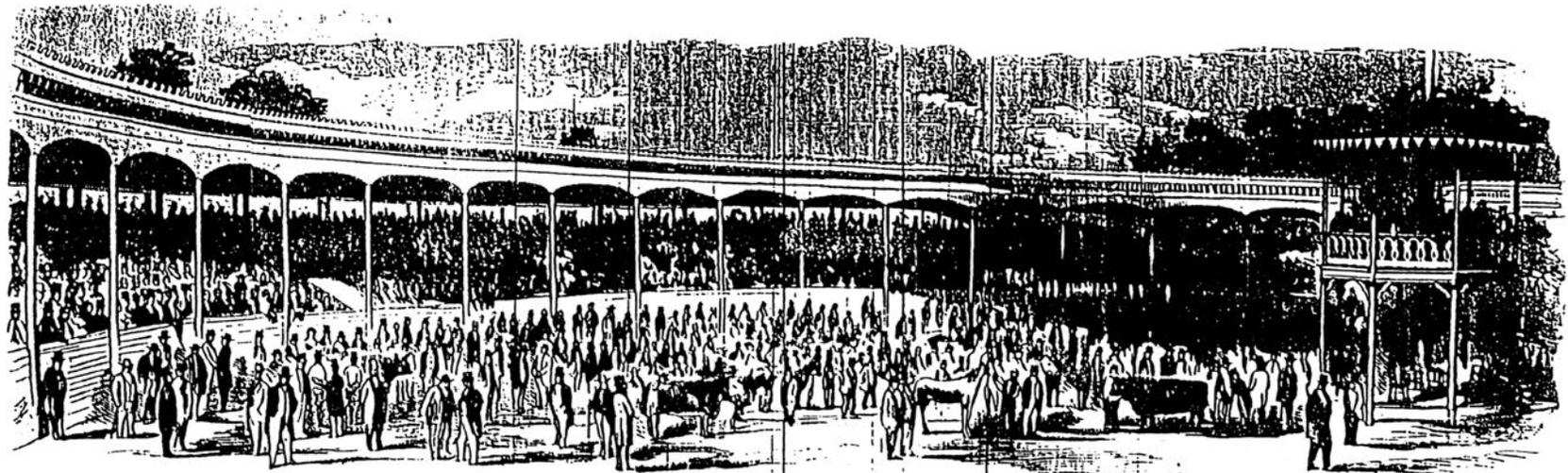
Racing, especially harness racing or trotting, remained generally popular despite its inherent alliance with gambling. This interest in racing persisted after the Revolution despite some concern that gambling (and therefore racing) was not proper or virtuous activity in the new nation. To demonstrate a sense of moral uprightness, it became patriotic, at least publicly, to reject gaming, cock-fighting and other expensive diversions and entertainment.<sup>52</sup> In both the North and South, though, an

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<sup>50</sup>*Fairs and Fairmakers*, 127-9. No source is cited for his description. There was an amphitheater in Louisville in 1857, and perhaps it is the object of Allen's description.

<sup>51</sup>Allen also describes the amphitheater's round track. Early race tracks in the South frequently were circles instead of ovals; some with a circumference as large as two miles. These circular forms appeared in Kansas too in at least Marion, Jackson, Lyon and Linn Counties. Dr. C. M. Rankin, member of the Kansas Racing Commission, in a February 21, 1995 interview noted that some Kansas racing old-timers call these circles "bull rings."

<sup>52</sup>Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 247.



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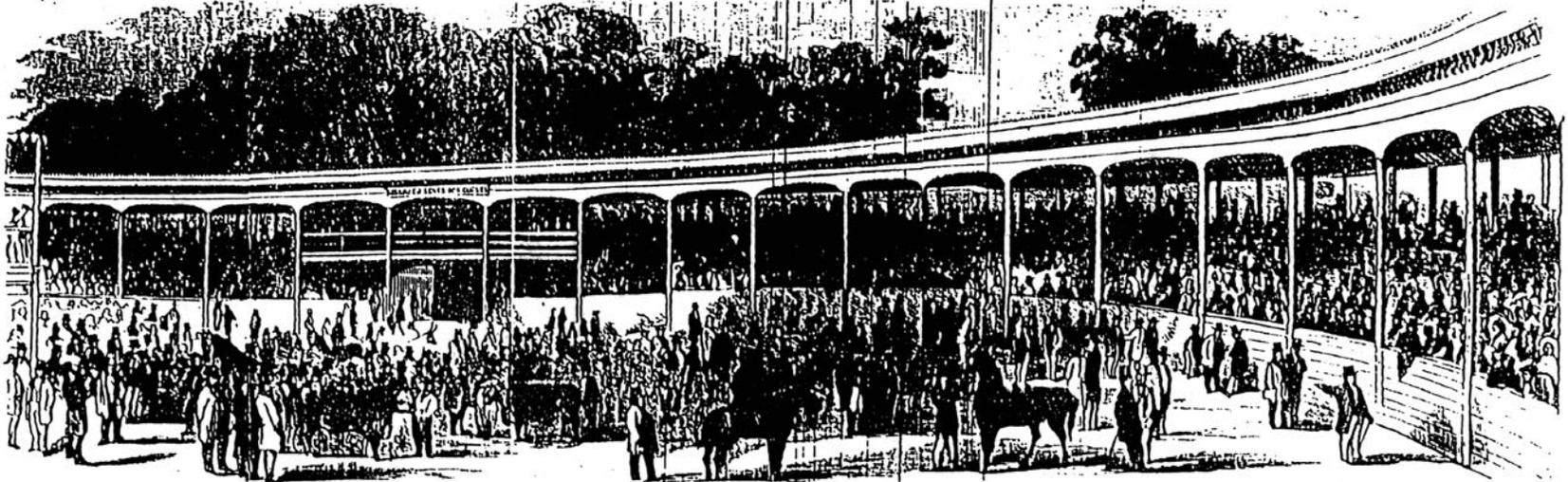


Figure 15. 1857 Amphitheater at Louisville, Kentucky.  
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 4 (September 18, 1857): 249.

interest in trotting just replaced an interest in flat racing. At least for many fair goers, harness racing was somehow purer than flat racing. Trotters appeared as utilitarian animals more suited to a farmer's needs. For example, the speed necessary for pulling a trotting sulky was similar to what a farmer or common folks needed when their horses pulled carts, buggies and wagons. Words in "Ya Got Trouble," from *The Music Man* express the acceptance of trotting.

The next thing you know your son is playin' for money in a pinch-back suit, and listenin' to some big out-a-town jasper, here to tell about horse race gamblin', not a wholesome trottin' race, no, but a race where they se'down right on a horse! Like to see some stuck-up jockey boy sitting on Dan Patch? Make your blood boil? Well, I should say.

To the contemporary mind distinctions between trotting and thoroughbred racing may appear fine since race horse owners needed deep financial pockets to breed them and organize races. They also needed the resources to gamble on race results. Trotting was accepted, however, because of a perceived social difference: the wealthy supported flat racing, while the trotting was for common folk; flat racing was the sport of kings, while trotting was done by local speedsters.<sup>53</sup>

Although thoroughbred or flat racing declined in the 1850s, trotting remained important to fairs. It attracted crowds and helped pay operating costs. Horse breeders argued too that a trotter's speed was a marketable characteristic much like any other measure of quality.<sup>54</sup> Fairs retained horse racing well into the twentieth century, but racing and its allied gambling continually challenged the educational mission of fairs.

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<sup>53</sup>Rankin interview. Prejudice against flat racing began in England where only the wealthy could afford such a hobby. In the United States, this elitist view of flat racing persisted.

<sup>54</sup>John Rickards Betts, "Agricultural Fairs and the Rise of Harness Racing," *Agricultural History* 27 (April 1953): 27, 73-4.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of racing was women's connection with it. Women became involved with track events first as equestrians showing their horsemanship skills, and then racing in competitions. Fairs at first promoted this activity and by at least the mid-1850s, women riders were part of many state fair programs.<sup>55</sup> When female equestrianism first appeared, agricultural editors enthusiastically supported riding and no one questioned its propriety.<sup>56</sup> But when lady equestrianism turned into entertainment for a crowd of race goers, the agricultural press believed such public displays did not fit the proper image of gentle women out to partake the fresh air. Competent women riding astride and competing for money and prizes challenged myths about feminine fragility. Women riding was encouraged in the proper context, but many writers for agricultural journals felt that fairs were not proper settings for such exhibitions.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the controversies, track events remained part of fairs in both the North and South. Also, regardless of region, agricultural society members remained well-to-do farmers and fairs had similar patterns of exhibition and entertainment. Fairs needed income to recover the costs of tents, sheds and pens, so societies surrounded their grounds by board fences and evolved a single entry point to collect admittance. Fairsapes remained mostly temporary so long as fairs moved from city to city, but even temporary structures often had neoclassical architectural elements.

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<sup>55</sup>Rasmussen, "State Fair: Culture and Agriculture in Iowa, 1854-1941," 90. They had participated in equestrian displays at London amphitheaters in the early nineteenth century, and a general interest in physical exercise for women and children helped promote riding.

<sup>56</sup>Albert Lowther Demaree, *The American Agricultural Press* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 132 and 221.

<sup>57</sup>For a lengthy discussion about women riding at fairs in Iowa, see Rasmussen, "State Fair," 90-98. Rasmussen confirms that there was a perceived difference between riding for exercise and the unnecessary daredevilry that women exhibited at fairs. As entertainment, it was not acceptable.

Fairs always had vendors and entertainment close by, but they were not generally allowed within the fence which surrounded the grounds.<sup>58</sup> Racing was part of the fairs so sites had race tracks.

While similar in many ways, fairs differed in emphasis. Compared to Northern fairs, which were organized by men for men to spread information about livestock improvement, Southern fairs tended to be important local social events for white families with activities centered on horses and horsemanship skills. Mississippi's fairs in the 1850s, for example, emphasized racing, tournaments, and entertainment. Horsemanship contests rewarded riders sometimes with expensive awards like diamond rings.<sup>59</sup> Livestock interested planters, but in Alabama they were more interested in saddle horses for racing than pedigrees in English cattle.

Permanent fair buildings appear to be the exception as late as 1867. The *American Agriculturist* reported in that year that in all the Connecticut counties only one fair had a such a structure.<sup>60</sup> Constructing permanent buildings began in 1853, however, when the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in New York City provided a new model for fair buildings (Figure 16). A remarkable structure, the Crystal Palace defined the visual essence of a proper fair building into the middle of the twentieth century and influenced fairs everywhere.<sup>61</sup> It synthesized in its architecture a message of progress and promise.

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<sup>58</sup>Fred B. Kniffen, "The American Agricultural Fair: The Pattern," 270.

<sup>59</sup>John Hebron Moore, *Agriculture in Ante-Bellum Mississippi* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958), 202.

<sup>60</sup>*American Agriculturist* 26 (March 1867): 95.

<sup>61</sup>This fair was called an exposition and helped muddle for the future any real distinction between the two words, although the New York State Fair tried for some time to use the word "show." Kenneth Luckhurst who wrote *The Story of Exhibitions* (New York: The Studio Publications, 1951), 12, explained that the term "fair" usually meant that things would be sold, although frequently what was sold also was displayed. Exhibitions were

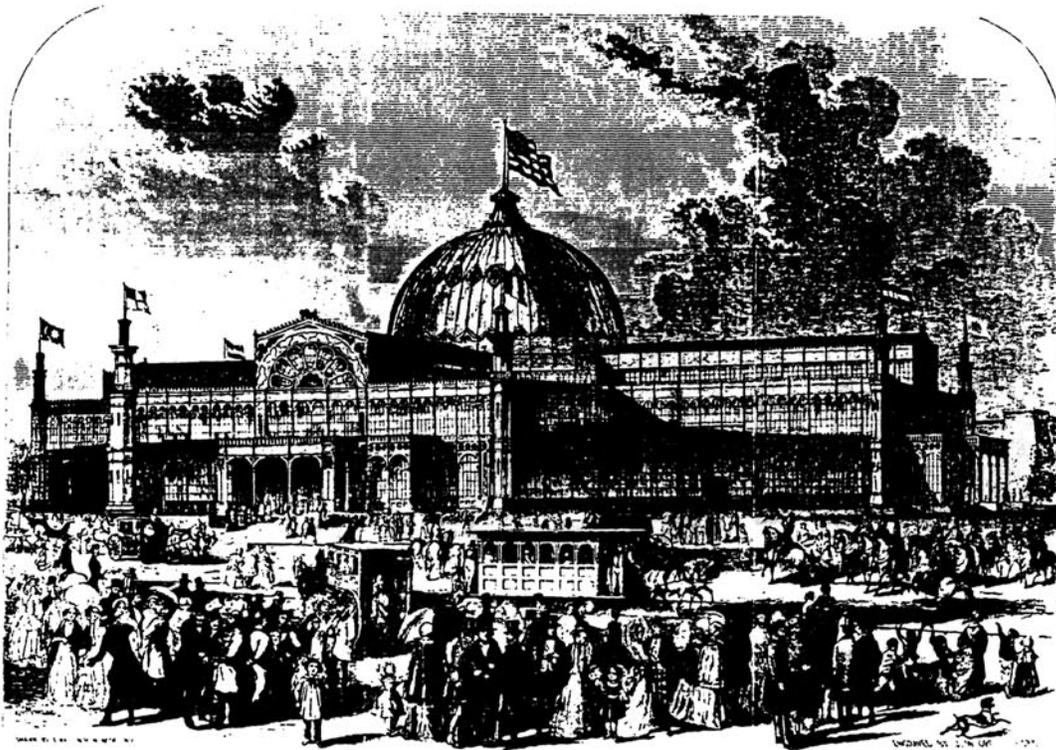


Figure 16. 1853 New York Crystal Palace, Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations. Linda Hyman, *Crystal Palace/42 Street/1853-1854* (New York: City University Graduate Center Mall, 1974), unpagued.

The New York Crystal Palace had a predecessor too, but overseas -- the 1851 Crystal Palace of London (Figure 17), which stressed man's materialistic, scientific and cultural achievements.

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events where the main activity was displaying, although things also were frequently sold. Because today's county fairs mostly display they really should be called exhibitions, according to Luckhurst. Libraries also use "agricultural exhibitions" instead of "fair" as a reference. Common usage and preference for the word "fair", however, has intertwined the two terms. No one calls a Kansas fair an "exhibition."

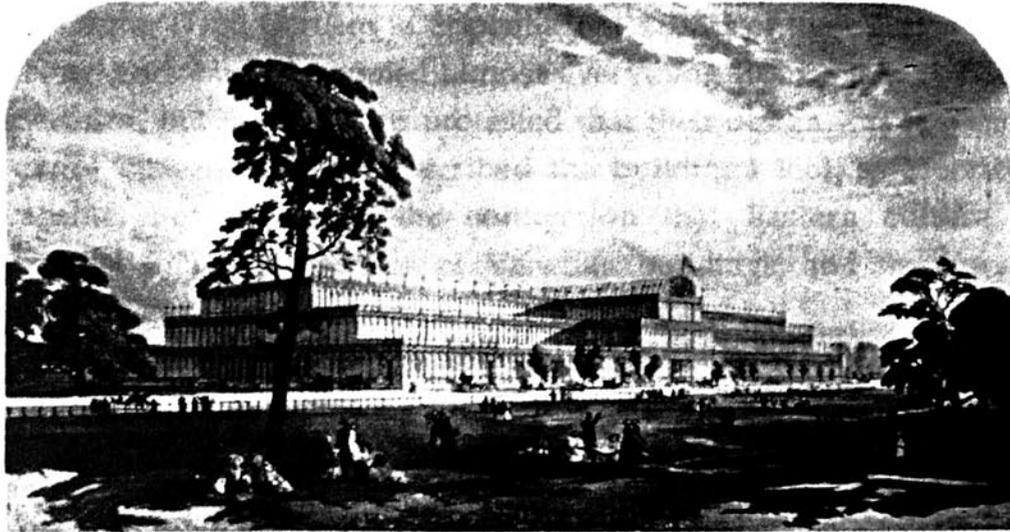


Figure 17. 1851 Crystal Palace in London.  
Charles Harvard Gibbs-Smith, *The Great Exhibition of 1851* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1981), 33.

Joseph Paxton designed the London Crystal Palace to shelter a whole fair under one roof. He used a combination of cast iron and glass to create a gigantic and rectangular crystalline box that enclosed about eighteen square acres. Paxton used two roof types, the cylindrical vault and flat ridge-and-furrow. These forms produced a roof with a dramatic appearance from both the outside and from within. Queen Victoria noted that the building's lightness and height produced a fairy-like atmosphere.<sup>62</sup>

New York City's exposition was modeled on the London event, so it is not surprising that the two Crystal Palaces were similar in look and

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<sup>62</sup>John Gloag and Derek Bridgwater, *A History of Cast Iron in Architecture* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1948), 200-1. Also see Thomas Jayne, "The New York Crystal Palace: An International Exhibition of Goods and Ideas," 33.

organization. Wealthy businessmen sponsored the New York exposition and held a competition for the building's design. George Carstensen and Charles Gildermeister, the architects who created the winning plan, also designed the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen. Critics of their design argued the New York building copied almost everything from the 1851 London predecessor, but the architects protested that their design was of Venetian influence instead. Writers described the building's look as Moorish or Byzantine, never making the connection that Eastern culture had contributed much to the look of Venetian buildings, and therefore the New York Crystal Palace.<sup>63</sup>

It seems obvious when comparing their building to Paxton's, that he influenced these architects, but they were not the only ones under the influence of London's crystal box. The committee had rejected a design by A. J. Downing out of hand because it was not to be built exclusively of iron and glass.<sup>64</sup> Clearly, the exposition board wanted another version of the London Crystal Palace. Figure 18 shows the building's plan. The site was at Sixth Avenue and Forty-Second Street in Reservoir Park.

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<sup>63</sup>James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exposition* (Philadelphia: Jones Brothers & Company, 1876), 175. The Renaissance came late to Venice and assimilated with a vernacular tradition which had evolved as a response to its watery setting and trade patterns from the Middle Ages. Peter Murray notes in *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 94, that Venetians traded in the Mediterranean and with the Eastern Roman Empire so there was a profound influence of Byzantine art on Venetian architecture.

<sup>64</sup>Jayne, "The New York Crystal Palace," 49.

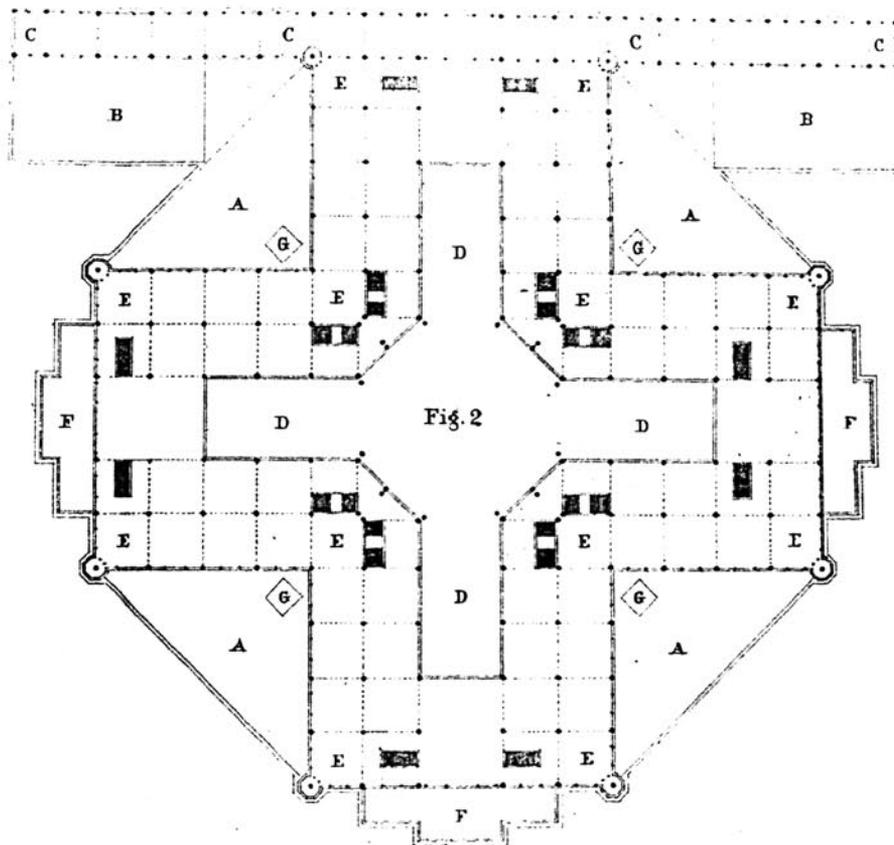


Figure 18. 1853 Crystal Palace Ground Plan of Gallery.  
 George Carstensen and Charles Gildemeister, *New York Crystal Palace: Illustrated Description of the Building*, (New York: Riker, Thorne, and Co., 1854), Plate II, Figure 2.

The building itself was in the form of a Greek cross with a central dome 71' above the crossing of the naves. From grade level it was 147' high, including the cupola lantern. Figure 19 shows an interior drawing. On each side of the naves ran aisles that extended two stories, with a clerestory.<sup>65</sup> Inside, the clerestory and glass roof brilliantly lit the Palace.

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<sup>65</sup>The clerestory is the upper stage of the main walls of a church, or a secular building above the aisle roofs. This area has windows which provide light for the building's interior. Clerestories can create a roof line called a "monitor," which is on many fair buildings. However there may or may not be windows; there may be just openings.



Figure 19. Interior of the Crystal Palace. Linda Hyman, *Crystal Palace/42 Street/1853-1854* (New York: City University Graduate Center Mall, 1974), unpagged.

The spaces between the exterior angles of the cross arms had triangular one-story lean-tos, 24' high. These lean-tos gave the ground plan its octagon form. The second story inside extended over the aisles and bays of each nave so there was a 54' wide gallery or promenade which went around the entire building. There were four large staircases under the dome, and eight at the ends of the aisles near the entrance halls. A gallery was eventually added to the original design along the reservoir side to increase display space for works of art.<sup>66</sup> The building's reservoir gallery was two stories and measured 450' x 21'. A nave section is in Figure 20.

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<sup>66</sup>George Carstensen and Charles Gildemeister, *New York Crystal Palace: Illustrated Description of the Building* (New York: Riker, Thorne, and Co., 1854), 23.

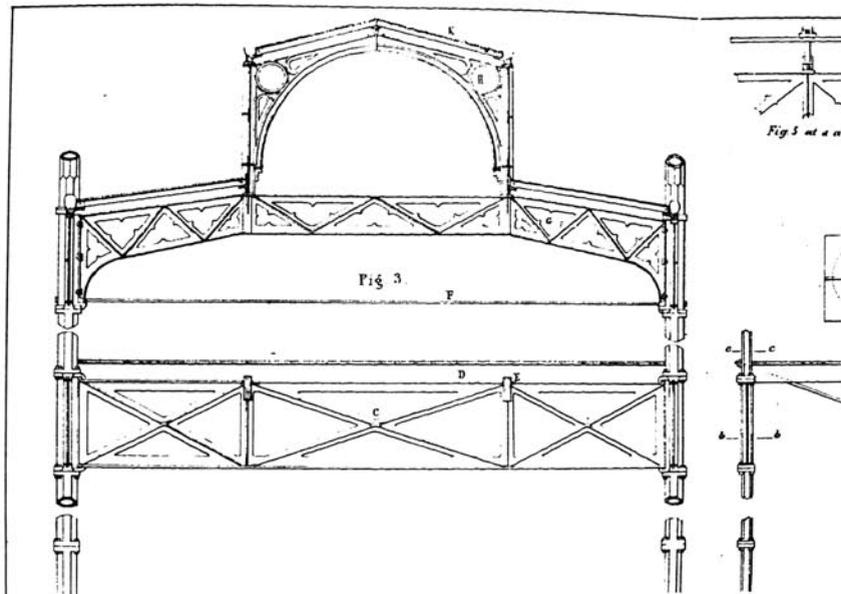


Figure 20. Transverse Section of the 1853 Crystal Palace Machine Archade and Picture Gallery. George Carstensen and Charles Gildemeister. *New York Crystal Palace: Illustrated Description of the Building*, (New York: Riker, Thorne, and Co., 1854), Plate VI, Figure 3.

While the New York building was similar to the London building in the use of cast iron and glass, there were also significant differences. Axonometric views of the London and New York buildings show these (see Figs. 21 and 22).

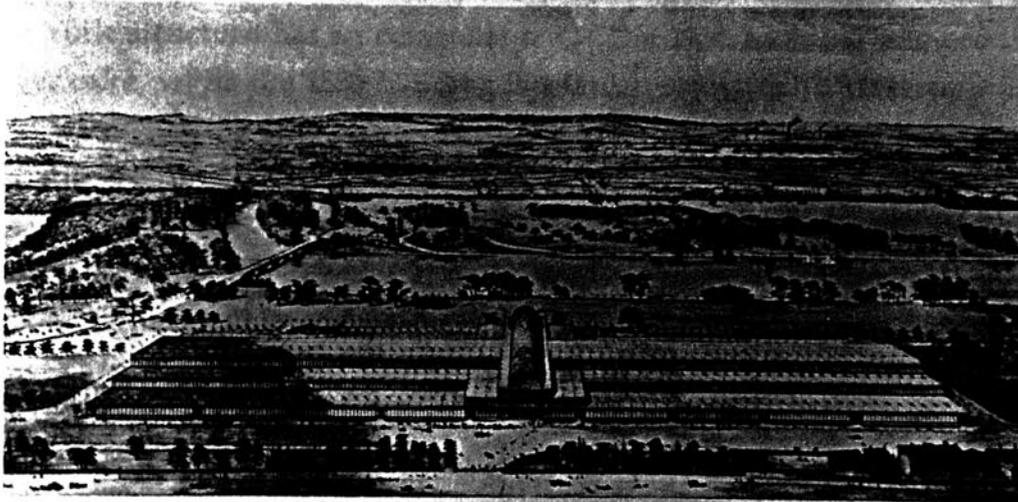


Figure 21. 1851 London Crystal Palace Axonometric View. Charles Harvard Gibbs-Smith, *The Great Exhibition of 1851* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1981), 38.

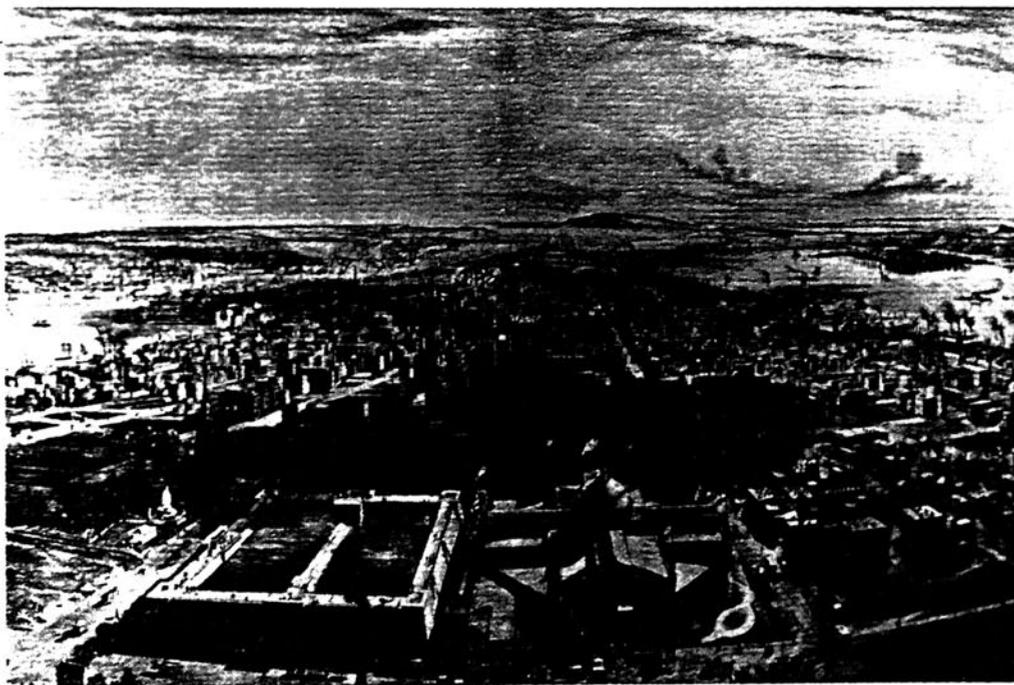


Figure 22. 1853 New York Crystal Palace Axonometric View. Linda Hyman, *Crystal Palace/42 Street/1853-1854* (New York: City University Graduate Center Mall, 1974), unpagged.

The 1851 London building has a rectangular footprint, while the New York structure has an octagonal one. The 1851 building is more like a layer cake, while the 1853 building is a Greek cross with a clerestory and naves paralleled by side aisles. The New York Palace had a circular dome over the crossing and the ends of the great cross arms had towers that contained staircases. Joseph Paxton's structure had none of these features. Perhaps the greatest difference, however, was in size. Paxton's building covered eighteen square acres, the New York Palace about four.

This first United States exposition was not successful when compared to the one in London. It had organizational and timing problems, and, because individual investors organized it, others saw the exhibition as a private entrepreneurial enterprise, scarcely representative of the nation. Many cities refused to take part, jealous of the attention New York would receive by hosting the exhibition. The reservoir location was criticized and the unfinished building delayed the opening.<sup>67</sup>

The Crystal Palace had attractions nearby as did other New York fairs. Since montebanks had been around for at least ten years, not surprisingly a midway of sorts formed on the empty lots on three sides of the Palace. One month from the time the fair opened, a visitor could find grog shops, side shows, gambling dens and "haunts of dissipation." Given the opportunity to see approved cultural exhibits, many chose instead to see exhibits of the unique and wondrous double-headed calves, harlequins, dwarfs, giants, dancing bears and "grinning darkies" on the streets outside the Palace.<sup>68</sup> While not officially part of the exhibition, the amusement area was as important as the Palace to many who attended.

Although the New York Crystal Palace burned five years after it opened and was a financial failure for the investors, the building was

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<sup>67</sup>McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*, 175.

<sup>68</sup>Linda Hyman, *Crystal Palace/42 Street/1853-54* (New York: City University Graduate Center Mall, 1974), unpagued.

extremely popular with the public.<sup>69</sup> Fitted with gas lights, *Harper's* magazine noted that at night it was a "scene more glorious and graceful than the imagination of Eastern storytellers."<sup>70</sup> *Putnam's Monthly* claimed that while similar to the London Crystal Palace, the New York building was sufficiently different from its prototype to make it quite interesting and new.<sup>71</sup> Although bothered by the reservoir park location, a writer could not contain his enthusiasm:

But when, at last, the proper hour came, when we saw the stately columns planted, and the crystal walls made fast, and the mighty dome suspended, our hearts broke forth in spontaneous gushes of gratulation and delight. Our expectations had been more than surpassed...."<sup>72</sup>

Information about the exhibition and drawings of the Palace were widely published.

For American builders, the Palace was a great achievement and the only other building of comparable large size was the U. S. Capitol. Sunday school teachers brought their children to the Palace believing a mere view of its construction and beauty would morally improve them.<sup>73</sup> The building proved that Americans were capable of keeping up with their peers across the sea; it also gave evidence to American success.

The Palace produced three vernacular patterns for future fair builders: the octagon, cross and monitor roof shown in Figure 23.

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid. See also Charles Hirschfeld "American on Exhibition: The New York Crystal Palace," *American Quarterly* 9 (1957), 101-116. Both Hyman and Hirschfeld confirm the popularity and interest in this fair.

<sup>70</sup>*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (November 1853): 844.

<sup>71</sup>*Putnam's Monthly* 2 (August 1853): 123.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid. 125-126.

<sup>73</sup>Jayne, "The New York Crystal Palace," 96.

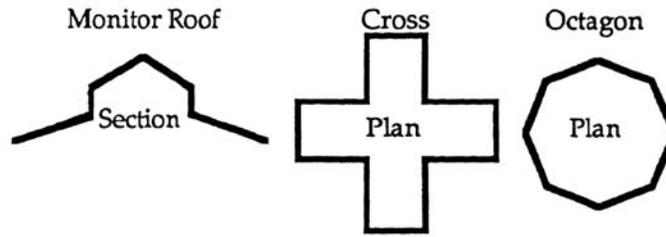
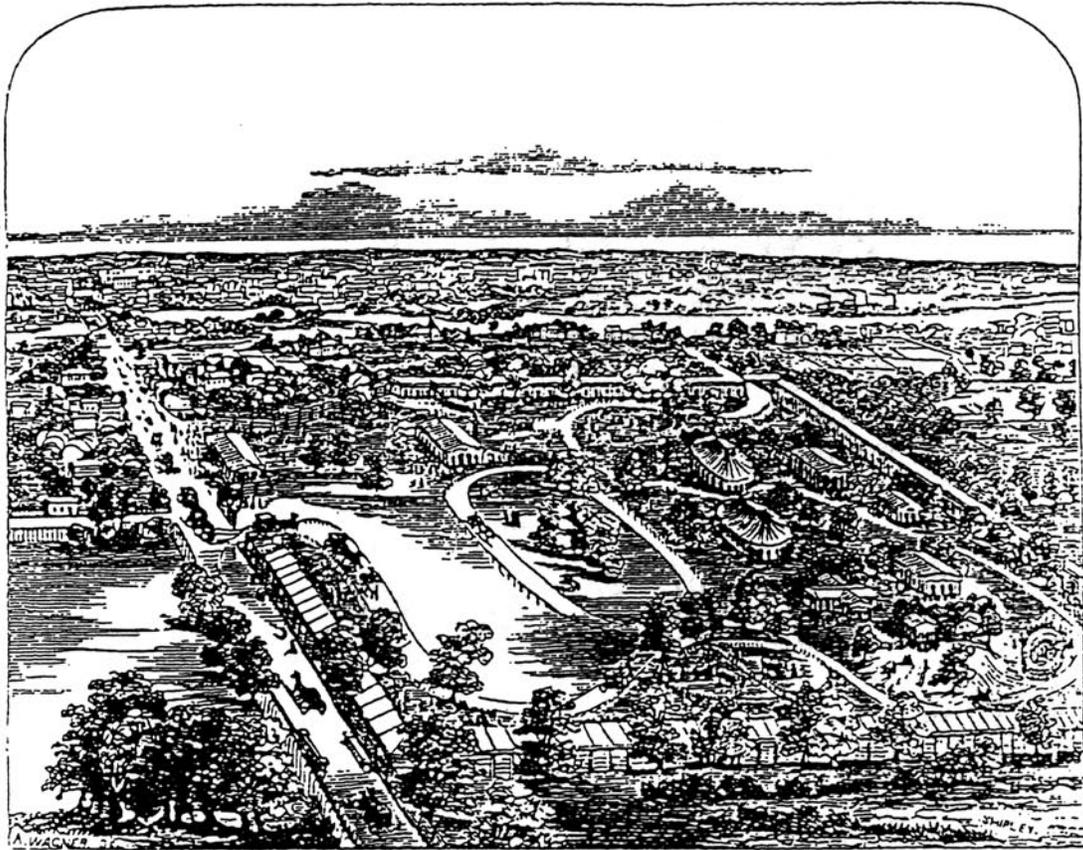


Figure 23. Monitor, Cross and Octagon Shapes.

By 1855, just two years after the New York Exposition opened, a simple Greek cross building had already appeared on the grounds of the Ohio State Fair (see the lower right-hand quarter of Figure 24).<sup>74</sup> While the grounds in Ohio resembled those of previous state fairs, the cross building form was new.

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<sup>74</sup>*Ohio Cultivator* 11 (September 1, 1855): 260.



**VIEW OF THE OHIO STATE FAIR GROUNDS.**

Figure 24. 1855 Ohio State Fair.  
*Ohio Cultivator* 11 (September 1, 1855): 260.

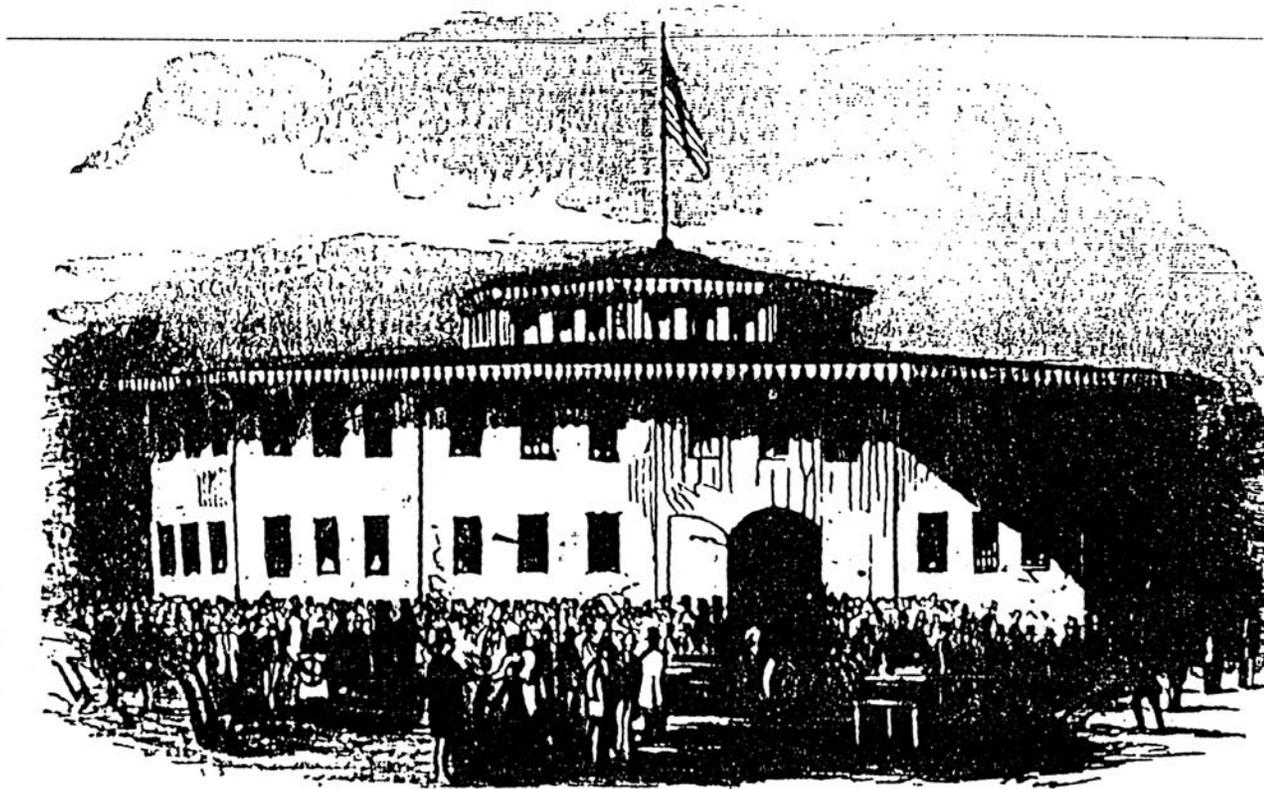


Figure 26. 1857 Louisville, Kentucky Polygon.  
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 4 (September 19, 1857): 248.

Chronological evidence connects the Crystal Palace to an increased use of crosses, octagonal or polygonal buildings and monitor roofs at fairs, but were there other prototypes that could have inspired the use of these forms? Research shows state fairs only rarely used the octagon before 1853 and only for small display structures, not large buildings. Besides fairgrounds, it appears that octagons did not become popular until late in the 1850s.<sup>76</sup>

Only one monitor-like roof appeared at a New York fair before 1853 but it was not like the roof line of the Crystal Palace. Figure 27 shows the differences.

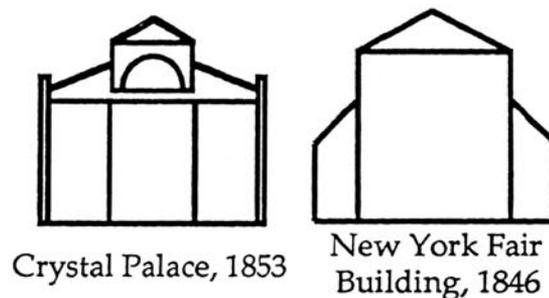


Figure 27. Sections of the 1853 Crystal Palace and 1846 New York Fair Building.

Monitor roofs were used in factory buildings at least by 1806, and they became a distinguishing feature of many early American mills (see Figure 28).<sup>77</sup> But again, the connection is less direct between fairs and factories than between fairs and the Crystal Palace.

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<sup>76</sup>The inspiration for octagons was from Orson Fowler's *The Octagon House: A Home for All*, published in 1848. Fowler clearly helped to inspire octagonal shapes in all kinds of structures, but octagons did not become really popular until the later years of the nineteenth century. It is difficult to create as strong a link between fair design and Fowler's book than between fair design and the Crystal Palace.

<sup>77</sup>William H. Jr. Pierson, *American Buildings and their Architects*. Vol. 2, 39.

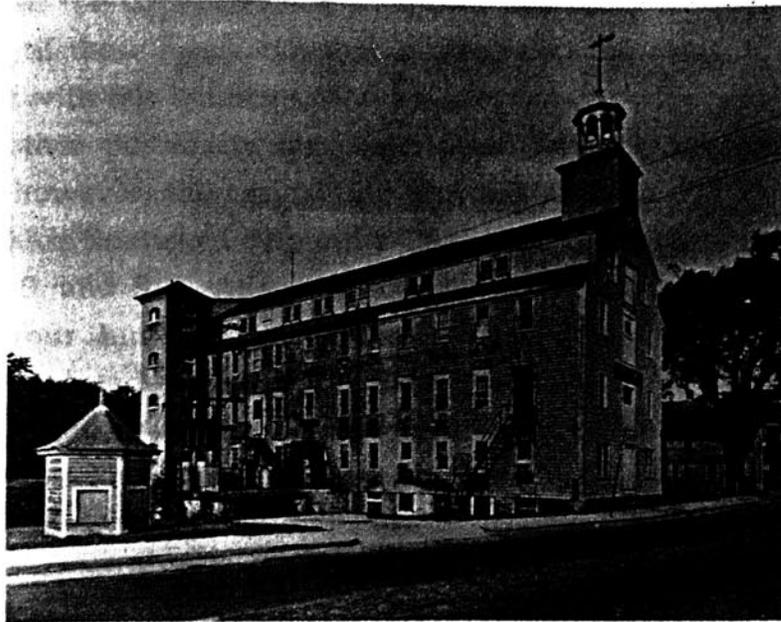


Figure 28. 1809 Lippitt Mill, West Warwick, Rhode Island.  
*American Buildings and their Architects. Vol. 2, Technology and the Picturesque, the Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 43.

The Greek cross plan with equal-length naves in churches preceded ones with an elongated nave. In the United States, secular variations of the cross theme were popular for public buildings such as the Capitol Building. But there is no evidence of the cross form at fairs before 1853.<sup>78</sup> Octagons, crosses and monitor roofs were classical forms which belonged

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<sup>78</sup>Jacob Burckhardt, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 80-95. Centralized buildings were common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and there is the tie between round and polygonal buildings with centralized plans. A. J. Davis, for example blended these round, polygonal, and centralized forms into his designs of public buildings. See *Alexander Jackson Davis: American Architect 1803-1893*, ed. Amelia Peck (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992).

in the repertoire of early nineteenth-century architects and builders. The significance of the Crystal Palace, then, lies not in its uniqueness or the combination of these forms, but that it associated the octagon, cross and monitor roof with fair buildings.

One other possibility for prescriptive fair architecture must be considered, however, the agricultural journals and handyman, or "how-to" books which flourished before the Civil War. Publishers included the brothers, A. B. and R. L. Allen, and Orange Judd. Between 1819 to 1860 more than four hundred periodicals appeared devoted primarily to agriculture related interests.<sup>79</sup> But a review of these potentially prescriptive resources prior to 1853 gives no indication that any of the buildings had architectural characteristics later used in the Crystal Palace. Significantly too, no fair buildings are discussed. This review in fact, suggests that perhaps the Crystal Palace and therefore classical forms, may have influenced barn designs instead.<sup>80</sup> Not until after the 1853 exhibition

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<sup>79</sup> Albert Lowther Demaree, *The American Agricultural Press 1819-1860*, xi, 11. Also see Richard T. Farrell, "Advice to Farmers: The Content of Agricultural Newspapers, 1860-1910," *Agricultural History* 51 (January 1977): 215.

<sup>80</sup>It is impossible to list all the sources for barn forms. LeRoy G. Schultz compiled a bibliography, *Barns, Stables and Outbuildings* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1986). This bibliography is unfortunately burdened with excessive errors, but is still somewhat useful especially for early publications that prescribed farm structure forms. In 1989, I also reviewed the barn literature for a proposed study of barns in Kansas, and among the articles, monitor barns were singled out as characteristic of barn types. I did not find any that denote the significance of the monitor roof until after 1900. The first was in a 1908 plan for a dairy barn (Edward H. Webster "Designs for Dairy Buildings," U. S. Department of Agriculture Bureau of Animal Industry, Circular 131, Government Printing Office), 11-15. Thomas E. French classified the monitor as a barn type in *Agricultural Drawings for Farm Structures* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1915), 51. Even a recent field guide to barns, by Allen G. Noble and Richard K. Cleek, *The Old Barn Book: A Field Guide to North American Barns and other Farm Structures* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University

do monitor roofs, cross and modified cross-shaped barns become predominant and recommended as building shapes.<sup>81</sup>

If John Fraser Hart is right that similar groups of people in similar environments have similar needs and make similar decisions to build similar structures, then traditional barn forms would maintain themselves unless there were some impetus to change.<sup>82</sup> In other words, if monitor roofs and cross-shaped barns were not part of farm landscapes before 1853, there was probably no quick transition to them unless the Crystal Palace forms provided the impetus to change. In the eyes of farmers, the Crystal Palace forms at fairs may have blended with those of agricultural fair barns. The mix of fair buildings and agricultural barns perhaps eased the transition of the monitor roof into an accepted barn form, for by about 1900, books on farm building design recommended the monitor roof especially for their circulation in dairy barns.<sup>83</sup> Polygonal and cross-shaped barns never occurred though in large numbers before 1853.

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Press, 1995), neither connects barn forms with fair buildings, nor explains the value of monitor roofs.

<sup>81</sup>While many barns look like they have clerestories, they have instead shed additions and the clerestory area is closed.

<sup>82</sup>John Fraser Hart "On the Classification of Barns," *Material Culture* 26 (Fall 1994): 37-46.

<sup>83</sup>From the literature on barns, information about the Shaker round barn appeared by 1827, but the first octagon barns plans were published in 1854. If Iowa is representative of barn building trends, some octagonal barns were build toward the end of the 1860s, and more in the 1870s; but most octagonal barns were built in the mid-1880s. See Lowell Soike, *Without Right Angles: The Round Barns of Iowa* (Des Moines: Iowa State Historical Department, Office of Historic Preservation, 1983), 4.

Polygonal or round barns were promoted and built by stock breeders and agricultural editors, and agriculturists, the same individuals involved in fairs. Some farmer-builders were interested in their supposed efficiency, some in their unobstructed hay mow, and others in their ability to withstand wind load.

Just as fairs that evolved from early agricultural societies had tried to distinguish themselves from earlier market fairs, the Crystal Palace distinguished itself visually. The comparison between fair building forms before and after 1853 shows that the Crystal Palace remains the critical image, establishing an identifiable pattern of exhibition architecture. Though it took some time for the patterns to predominate among new buildings, they did in Kansas by the 1870s.

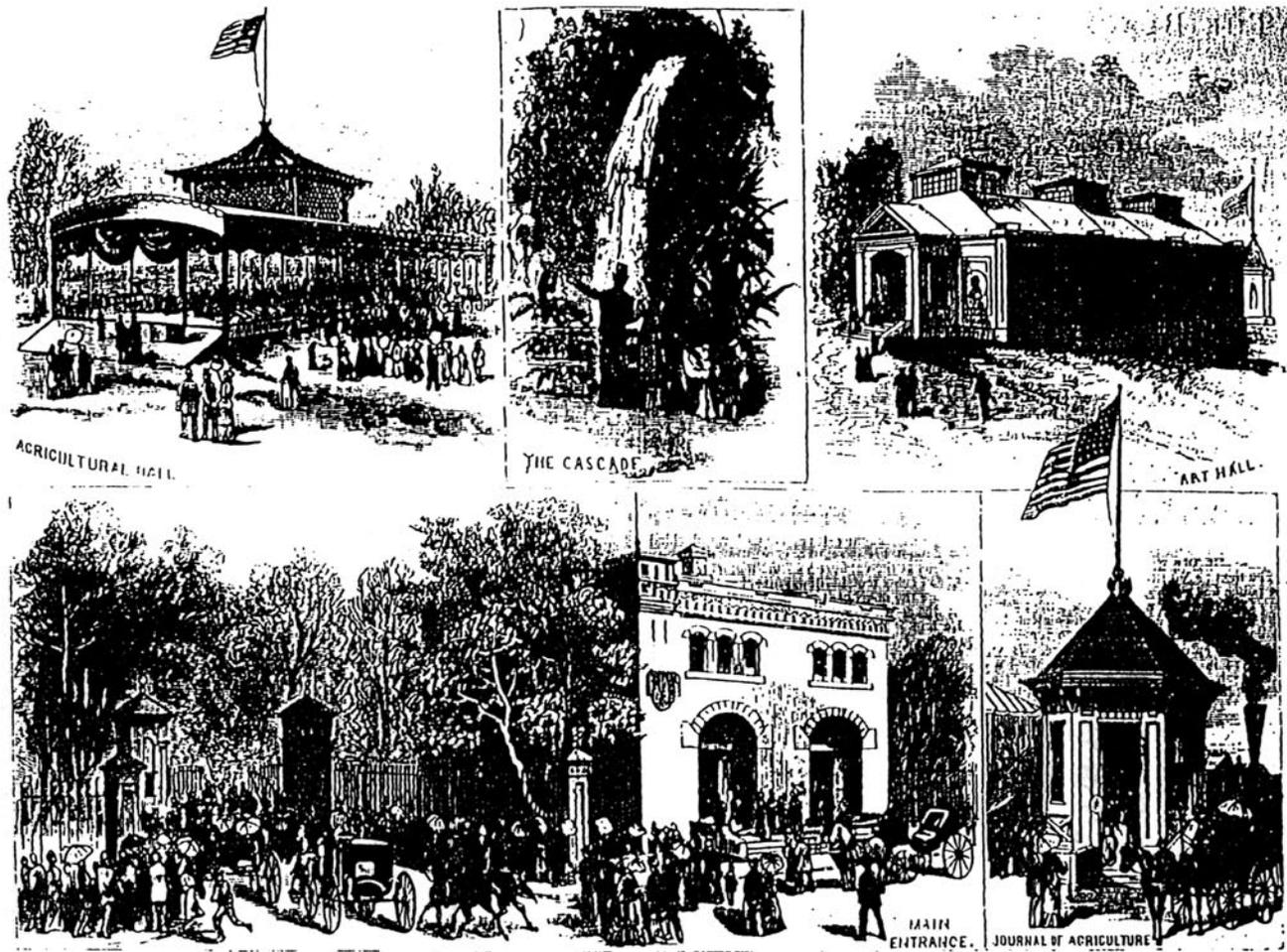
One other influential fair occurred closer to Kansas: the St. Louis Exhibition, which blended fair elements from both the North and South. In 1855 the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association formed a stock corporation to promote agriculture and mechanical arts and to boost St. Louis' image. The 1856 fair brought together two ideas that St. Louis citizens wanted to promote: that their city was the granary and garden center of the nation, and that it was a progressive hub for industry and advancing technology.<sup>84</sup>

For its first fair, the association built an amphitheater, a mechanical hall, a circular floral hall, a machine shop, 350 stalls for cattle, and a landscaped grounds with fountains. Some of these buildings are shown in Figure 29. Other landscape elements included two main gates with "fantastic sentry boxes," a "model cottage for the benefit of the women," pens for sheep and swine, and a shady grove.<sup>85</sup> The production paid the

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<sup>84</sup>Lawrence Lowic, *The Architectural Heritage of St. Louis 1803-1891*. (St. Louis: Washington University Gallery of Art, 1982), 101.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid. I learned the shape of the floral hall in a phone conversation with a librarian at the Missouri Historical Society Archives in St. Louis. Since so many floral halls were octagonal, I contacted the archives to see if they had a description of the building, which they did. The building cited by the librarian was the *Sketch Book of St. Louis*, by J. N. Taylor and M. O. Crooks (St. Louis: George Knapp and Company, 1858), 97.



MISSOURI.—TWENTIETH ANNUAL SHOW OF THE ST. LOUIS FAIR ASSOCIATION AT ST. LOUIS.—FROM SKETCHES BY ARMAND WELKEL.—SEE PAGE 139.

Figure 29. 1880 St. Louis Fair Association Buildings.  
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 41 (October 30, 1880): 137.

association \$25,000. In 1857 the association added a fine arts hall and within a few years, the fairground grew into a city of Greek and gothic architecture, which included an octagonal chicken palace.<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting of the fair buildings was the amphitheater, for its look was nearly identical to the one described by Kentuckian James Allen. The structure was a round building, roofed, a quarter-mile in circumference, with three levels and a promenade; it sat 12,000 persons.<sup>87</sup> Unless they were built into a hillside as several early ones in Kansas were, a section would look similar to Figure 30. The basic structure was triangular shaped, with seats in ascending layers. Frequently a shed or broken gable roof covered the structure and there was room beneath the seats for booths, which sold food and drink.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* 41 (October 30, 1880) 344; and Charles Van Ravenswaay, *St. Louis: An Informal History of the City and Its People, 1764-1865* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1993), 447.

<sup>87</sup>Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* 2 (November 8, 1856): 341. Also see Lawrence Lowic, *The Architectural Heritage of St. Louis 1803-1891*, 101

<sup>88</sup>William N. Woodbury also noted in *Grandstand and Stadium Design* (New York: American Institute of Steel Construction, 1947), 1-3, that the history of grandstands is related to Greek and Rome structures. At the same time that amphitheaters were evolving in the 1840s and 50s at fairs and circuses, so too seating for the growing crowds at baseball games. Although baseball was not originally part of fair activities, it is possible that early amphitheaters were also the prototypes for baseball stadiums. Woodbury argues that they are built the same way.

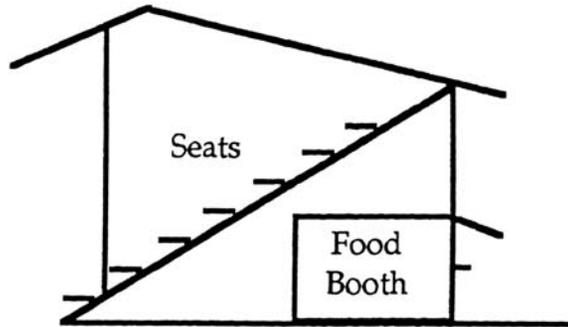


Figure 30. Grandstand Section.

Shown in Figure 31, the amphitheater held the most important events: livestock shows and, the biggest draw for fair goers -- harness racing.<sup>89</sup> Figure 32 shows the 45' tall, hexagonal, pagoda-style judge's stand that rose from the center of the amphitheater's ring.<sup>90</sup>

The St. Louis Fair became a significant continuing national event. It was certainly known in Kansas, for an observer in 1867 described the fair and complained about the trotting ring being too small.<sup>91</sup> *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* noted that the St. Louis fairgrounds were probably unsurpassed even in the East.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>John Rickards Betts, "Agricultural Fairs and the Rise of Harness Racing," 75. Sketch from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 2 (November 8, 1856): 341.

<sup>90</sup>Lowic, *The Architectural Heritage of St. Louis*, 101. *A Prairie Farmer* 6 (August 9, 1860): 84, noted that the Illinois State Fair (Jacksonville) built their version of the amphitheater and pagoda in 1860. The amphitheater, however was only two-thirds of a circle. Sketch from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 2 (November 8, 1856): 345.

<sup>91</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 4 (November 1867): 174. This complaint about the ring's size may have referred to the differences between oval and circular tracks. The smaller circular tracks may have seemed quite small compared to the one or one-half mile ovals seen frequently at Northern fairgrounds.

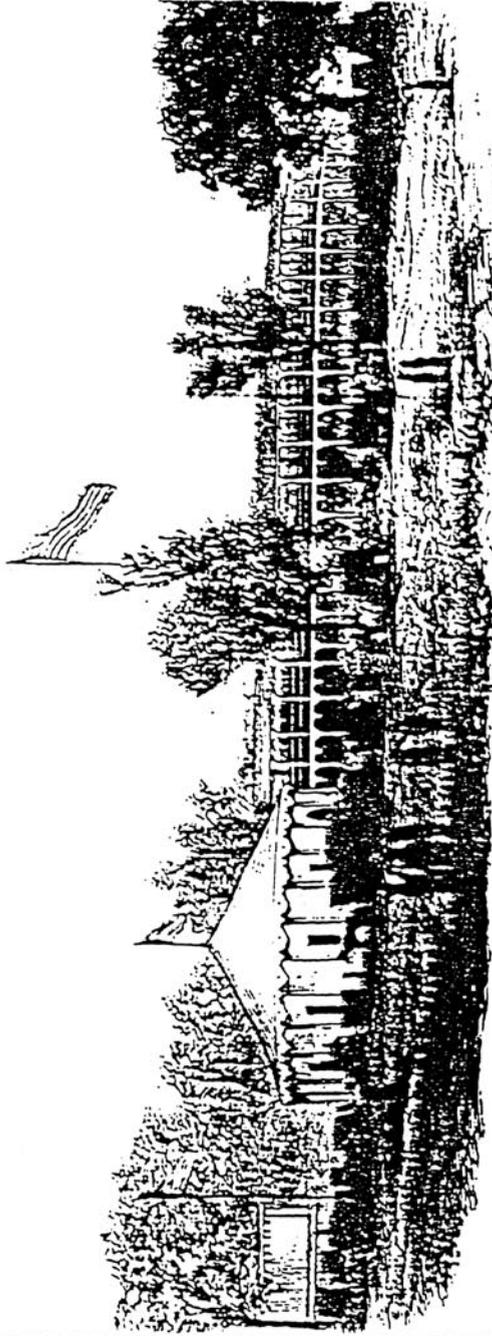
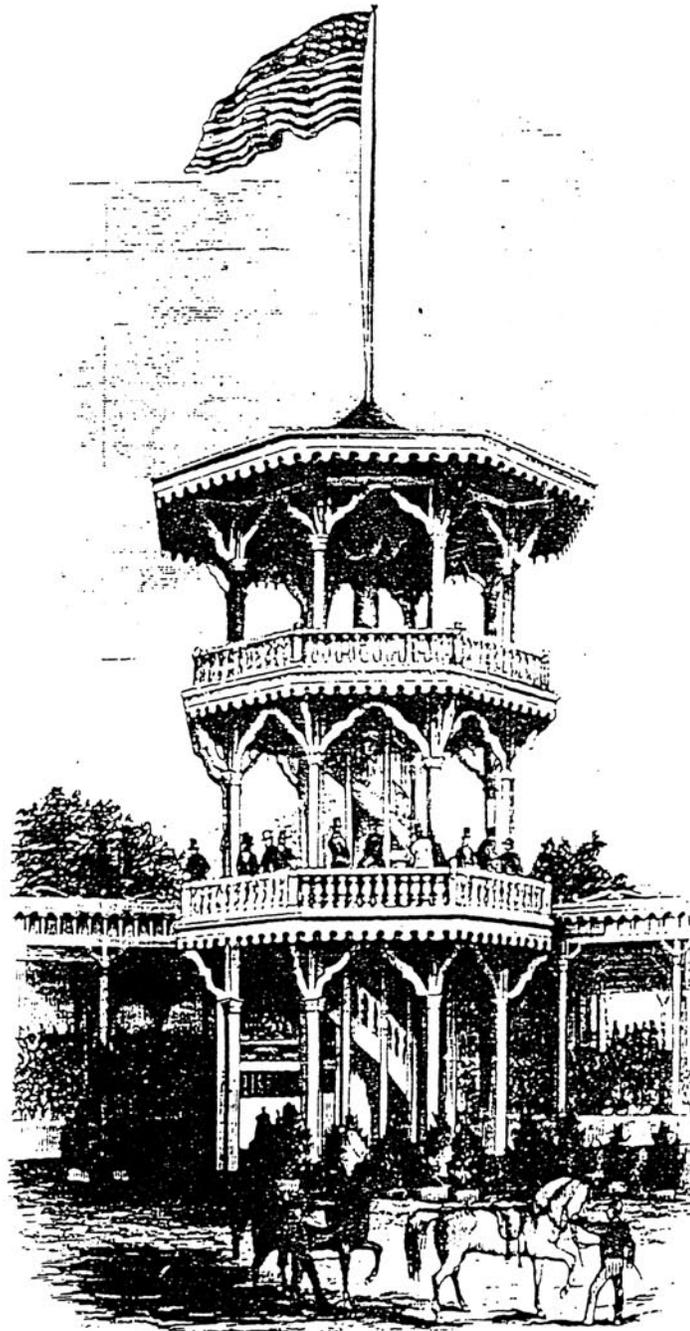


Figure 31. Fair Grounds and Amphitheater of St. Louis Fair Association.  
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 2 (November 8, 1856): 341.

<sup>92</sup>(November 8, 1856): 344. Also see *World's Fair Scrapbook*, Vol. 1, 88, Missouri Historical Society Library. This book of newspaper clippings contains a July 28, 1955 newspaper photo caption that notes that the St. Louis fairground was so popular that Fair Thursday was a civic holiday for years. From 1855 to 1902 fairs were held there every year except for the Civil War period. The fairgrounds was abandoned when the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition opened.



THE PAGODA AND FLAGSTAFF, CENTRE OF THE AMPHITHEATRE. PHOTOGRAPHED BY FITZGERALD.

Figure 32. Pagoda of St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association.  
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 2 (November 8, 1856): 345.

As far as Kansas is concerned, perhaps the most important aspect of the St. Louis fair was its role in carrying westward the established fairscapes and architecture that originated in the North and the South. It featured Greek and gothic buildings from New York and Ohio, the amphitheater tradition from the South, and of course, Crystal Palace octagons and cross shapes. The format of this fair is also important: who organized it and why. Instead of gentlemen farmers promoting the improvement of agriculture, the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association organized as a stock corporation to promote St. Louis. Agriculture was included, but it did not drive the fair's organizers specifically. The fair was a booster tool, an event to bring fair goers to the city to help the local economy. The fair was organized by the commercial elite who had the time and money to participate in the organization. These patterns were repeated in Kansas during the state's traditional fair period from 1854-1900.

## Summary

Promoters of early fairs in the U. S. were not necessarily farmers, rather a group of elite Americans who aspired to develop a landed gentry class. Their primary interest was in livestock improvement through breeding, a subject of little application to common farmers who usually could neither purchase stock from abroad nor afford to diverge much from subsistence farming that sustained their families.

Based on English prototypes, gentlemen farmers formed early agricultural societies and promoted the agricultural fair as a way to disseminate information about breeding. Organizations offered premiums, and cities and merchants began to help sponsor fairs by putting up temporary accommodations or lending their public buildings for exhibit activities.

The New York State Fair, a prototype for others fairs, used fenced sites to collect an entrance fee to the grounds which helped societies pay expenses. As the fair moved from city to city, temporary buildings became more elaborate and reflective of architectural trends, especially the neoclassical and gothic. Eventually, when the 1853 New York Crystal Palace Exhibition presented a new visual template for exhibition architecture, fairs began to incorporate its patterns into new buildings.

The importance of racing in the North and South is conveyed in large and expensive amphitheaters, such as the one at St. Louis, and in the race tracks which are depicted in drawing after drawing of state and local fairs. Visual descriptions of tracks in popular newspapers document the significance of the activity around the track. Yet racing and its ties with gambling were always issues for those concerned about the nation's morals. Gambling created an underlying tension which surrounded the sport, a tension which eventually helped precipitate changes in the look of Kansas fairs.

Agricultural societies also sold privileges to booth operators and those running games of chance to help pay the expenses of their fairs.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>*American Farmer* 6 (December 1853): 342.

Midway-like activities began to be more institutionalized in space by the 1840s and their presence attracted fair goers. Racing and midway activities raised attendance at state fairs in the 1840s and 1850s, although many continued to struggle financially. Fairs could rarely generate enough income to cover the costs of building new fair space annually, and a few rainy days could ruin any chance of staying out of debt.

While gentlemen farmers tried to raise the status of fairs, racing and entertainment simultaneously attracted common fair goers which created tension over the purpose of fairs. By 1857, there was strong and open criticism in the *Ohio Farmer* of peddlers selling their bogus cure-alls on the state's fairgrounds.<sup>94</sup> Understanding the mutual dependence of entertainment, racing and fairs is important because their landscapes persisted in most Kansas fairs, as did the tension that surrounded them.<sup>95</sup>

Livestock improvement has remained of primary importance throughout fair history, but exhibits of domestic production, floral and horticultural items, and new inventions and products eventually joined animals. With more exhibit classes and entries, items were grouped and housed together in separate buildings. In the 1840s women increased their presence frequently as the creators of taste building temples, birds of paradise, and elaborate sculptural forms.<sup>96</sup> By 1850, women had become keepers of the domestic and floral halls and were expected not only to fill them with exhibits, but decorate them artistically and tastefully.

Only a little is known about early nineteenth-century county or local fairs other than that they were held in public buildings and

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<sup>94</sup>*Ohio Farmer* 6 (September 26, 1857): 153.

<sup>95</sup>Few Kansas 4-H fairs have carnivals, however, and many small fairs find it difficult to engage a carnival since many are locked into long-term contracts with other counties.

<sup>96</sup>*American Agriculturist* 9 (November 1850): 354. This description is given for the Saratoga County Agricultural fair, so this creative designation for women was not just limited to New York state fairs.

grounds. But by 1853, however, fair landscapes included the following elements:

1. separate landscapes.
2. tight board fencing.
3. fenced show rings for animal exhibition.
4. gates for collecting entrance fees.
5. impermanent, wooden and gable-roofed halls or large tents.
6. pens and stalls for animals.
7. food/drink concessions or dining halls.
8. ticket and business offices.
9. midway area.
10. race tracks and amphitheaters.

Some early fairscape patterns were gradually discarded such as leisurely carriage drives through the grounds. These became impossible to maintain as fair attendance grew. Agricultural societies also discarded formal banquets and balls held during the fair for society members.

On the eve of the Civil War, fair activities included stock breeders showing prize livestock, manufacturers displaying machinery, judges awarding premiums, politicians giving speeches, sideshows parading curiosities, horses racing, booths selling pies and coffee, and swings giving riders a thrill. Trials of speed included trotting and pacing.

While Kansans attribute their heritage to the New Englanders who helped settle the territory as a free state, settlers from many other states also came to the territory and the state's fair patterns have blended traditions from both the North and South. Probably the most far reaching prototype in both building form and promotional mission was the Crystal Palace. Boosters used this well-received model as a way to draw attention to their new state, and it served them well to the end of the nineteenth century.

## **Part III**

### **Patterns in Kansas**

Chapter 3. Kansas Fairs - Traditional Era: 1854-1900<sup>1</sup>



Figure 33. Traditional Era Fairs.



Figure 34. Traditional Fairscape, Kansas State Fair Grounds, c. 1891.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

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<sup>1</sup>Figure 33 gives the main fair types held during the traditional era. Figure 34 is a traditional era fairscape.

Kansans got involved in fairs early. The territorial laws of 1855 contained provisions for the governance of agricultural societies and fair sponsorship.<sup>2</sup> In 1857 members of the territorial legislature appointed a committee to organize the territory's first agricultural society, but little is known about this society because Quantrill's raiders destroyed the group's records. The organization's treasurer, C. C. Hutchinson, later recalled that a primary task was to collect the agricultural reports from other states.<sup>3</sup>

Six county agricultural societies formed before statehood, but burden of first settlement, sectional conflict, and the 1860 drought left little time to begin or nurture fairs.<sup>4</sup> There were a few, however, and the first was held in 1858 in a small town in southwest Johnson County called McCamish. Although McCamish did not survive and details of the fair are sketchy, horse racing was one of the activities.

Probably the best described fair of territorial period was held in 1859 at the Congregational church in Lawrence. The 10-acre fairgrounds was temporarily fenced to hold the livestock show which had twenty premium classes. In addition, there were classes for photographs, drawings, paintings, and flowers.<sup>5</sup> Merchants participated by exhibiting

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<sup>2</sup>*The Statutes of the Territory of Kansas*, 1855, Shawnee M. L. School: John T. Brady, Public Printer, Chapter 58, (Sec. 1 and 2), 834; (Sec. 3 to 8), 835; (Sec. 9 to 13), 836, An "Act to Incorporate the Territorial Agricultural Society." This authorizes the incorporation the Kansas Territorial Agricultural Society. The society could hold land and erect buildings and enclosures for the exhibition of various breeds of horses, cattle, mules and other stock and of agricultural, mechanical and domestic manufacturers (pages 834-35). The society could also establish branches in any county (page 836).

<sup>3</sup>Owsley, *History of Early Kansas Agricultural Societies*, 5-6.

<sup>4</sup>Societies were in Coffey, Douglas, Franklin, Linn and Wabaunsee Counties; the location of the sixth's, the Southern Kansas Agricultural and Mechanical Society, is unknown.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Taft, *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science* 58 (Summer 1955): 152-54, The Editor's Page.

farm machinery, carpets and clothing. Amusements included essay and baby contests, wrestling matches and horse racing. Midway gamblers operated their wheels of fortune, shell games and little jokers. In the ladies' equestrian contest fifteen local women competed for a new saddle. This early fair, mainly a social event, took place in public space in a semi-public building, with the grounds marked off by a temporary fence.<sup>6</sup> Beyond its social role, the fair provided valuable advertising for Lawrence.<sup>7</sup>

In Kansas as elsewhere, agricultural societies tended to represent gentlemen farmers who used them to demonstrate their virtue and intelligence. By looking at the composition of the state society in 1872, one can see this elite pattern. Of the approximately 185 members, only about 5 percent called themselves farmers, breeders, fruit growers or stockmen. Members included judges, newspaper editors, district attorneys, land office agents, ministers, lawyers, doctors, bankers, mayors, jewelers, court clerks, Indian agents, sheriffs and the governor of the territory.<sup>8</sup> Although many of these individuals farmed and owned lands, they also had the economic resources and where-with-all to devote themselves to public leadership and service.

In one way the first Kansas agricultural society did vary from the established pattern, for it did not immediately organize a state fair; instead the organization worked first on an efficient system to collect agricultural

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 154-5. Three county fairs were held in 1860: Bourbon, Lykins (now Miami County), and Coffey counties. These also had lady equestrian races.

<sup>7</sup>Also see Merrill E. Jarchow, *The Earth Brought Forth: A History of Minnesota Agriculture to 1885* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1949), 247-48, for the public relations value of such fairs.

<sup>8</sup>*Agricultural Board Report to the Legislature of Kansas for the Year 1873* (Topeka: State Printing Works, Geo. W. Martin, Public Printer, 1874), 10-12.

data from the counties. The society believed that the data, when published in the *Kansas Farmer*, would be valuable for promoting the state.<sup>9</sup>

Early in 1863 the society decided to hold its first state fair and accepted bids from towns wishing to host it. The first "show" was at Leavenworth in October. The fair had a selection of livestock breeds, manufacturing, and other products "highly creditable to the state."<sup>10</sup> This first fair was really a show of purebred livestock and allowed fairgoers to buy from breeders. Leavenworth built two semi-permanent buildings for this fair, a floral hall (18' x 60') and a fair headquarters (14' x 28').<sup>11</sup> The fair, however, lost money. The Civil War interrupted fairs; there were none in 1864 and 1865.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the fairs sponsored by the state society, county groups organized fairs too. State statutes allowed county agricultural societies to organize as stock corporations, so they raised capital by selling shares. This organizational model determined early that agricultural associations would remain in the hands of those who had the time and money to invest in them, so most stockholders were town merchants, businessmen and landowners. The history of Labette County's agricultural associations shows how these organizational laws played out and affected fairs' viability. Labette County formed in 1867, and by 1868 the first stockholders organized the Labette County Agricultural and Mechanical Society in Oswego, the county seat. The group proposed to purchase a fair site, but did not. In 1870, a second society, the Labette County Agricultural and Horticultural Society, formed and held several successful fairs, and developed a fairground. It reorganized under a new charter in 1873. By

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<sup>9</sup>*Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of Kansas for the Year 1873* (Topeka: State Printing Works, Geo. W. Martin, Public Printer, 1874), 8-9.

<sup>10</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 1 (October 1863): 140.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Owsley, *The History of Early Agricultural Societies*, 14-18.

1880 the reorganized society had constructed a new grandstand, but the mortgage lenders foreclosed and the society disbanded in 1883.<sup>13</sup> A third organization formed in 1872, this time in the town of Labette, the Labette County Agricultural Horticultural and Mechanical Association, but this group also quickly disappeared.

In the summer of 1884 with no organization to sponsor a fair, a fourth group formed in Labette County, the Neosho Valley Stock Association, and used the old 1870 Oswego fairgrounds. This organization also disbanded after one year, and no other societies formed until 1891, when a fifth organization, the Labette County Horticultural and Agricultural Fair Association formed and received a state charter. This group held two fairs.

In 1882, a group in Parsons, still in Labette County, started the Parsons Fair and Driving Park Association. This association bought land and held fairs from 1882 to 1886. From 1886 to 1911, however, all county agricultural associations disappeared from the state's list of counties with chartered fairs. Two other groups appear during these early years in the county's history -- a horticultural society in 1877, and a livestock association in 1884 but they did not survive either.<sup>14</sup>

Each county's experience was unique, but nearly all repeated Labette County's pattern of multiple starts and failures; in several counties more than one chartered association tried to start at the same time. Some groups were agricultural societies, and some, like the Parsons example,

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<sup>13</sup>Premium Book for Labette County Agricultural Society in Oswego, September 12-15, 1882. Also see Nelson Case, *History of Labette County, Kansas from the First Settlement to the Close of 1892* (Topeka: Crane and Company, 1893), 74.

<sup>14</sup>Fairs may have resumed earlier, or perhaps there were other sporadic fairs, but these are unknown. Fairs organizations are taken from premium book information for Labette county, a 1906 *Standard Atlas of Labette County, Kansas* (Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Company, 1906), 53 and Nelson Case, *History of Labette County*, 74-5.

founded both fairs and race tracks or driving parks.<sup>15</sup> Merchants and businessmen kept trying because fairs advertised the towns that supported them. What better way could they boost a county, community or business? Fairs were marketing tools.

The history of Harvey County's agricultural societies provides another example where town citizens maintained leadership. The county's first fair in Newton was in 1874, and the agricultural society erected several fair buildings. To make sure its members recovered enough to pay for their investment the society relied on horse racing to attract attendance. The president of the second fair was the local newspaper editor; he used his position extensively to promote the fair.<sup>16</sup> In the 1880s, a physician took over running Newton's fairs.<sup>17</sup> County fairs did not travel from town to town as the state fairs did, so merchants and town boosters were quite aware of the economic benefits of promoting and sponsoring a fair "open to the world."<sup>18</sup>

While fairs were mainly for merchants, agricultural exhibits did matter. Stock and crop exhibits needed to be impressive to encourage

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<sup>15</sup>Nelson Case, *History of Labette County*, 72-5. Information about fair frequency also comes from the lists of fairs for particular years published in the *Kansas Farmer*, by the state agricultural reports, or from the *American Agriculturist*.

<sup>16</sup>Newspaper editors were notorious boosters. This example is only one of many.

<sup>17</sup>Harvey County Historical Society, *Harvey County History* (Newton: Curtis Media Company, 1990), 22-3.

<sup>18</sup>This slogan was displayed on most premium books before 1900. Towns encouraged participation by anyone from the surrounding counties or states. In 1867, for example, Gardener, Johnson County, published in the *Kansas Farmer* 4 (September 1867): 146, that its fair was open to the world. This encouraged stock breeders from outside Kansas to show their animals; the same was true for race-horse owners. Such cross-state exhibiting was not uncommon. At the 1871 Kansas state fair, California and Missouri sent agricultural displays.

settlers to emigrate. Piles of lush apples visually guaranteed that the county's soil was fertile and success was only a matter of hard work. Every town tried to make its fair exhibits most attractive. One remarkable example of an early booster fair is the 1886 Southwestern Kansas Exposition (see Figures 35 to 38). Garden City promoters wanted to disprove the myths that the state's southwestern counties were in the Great American Desert, an area deemed unfit for farming.<sup>19</sup> Fourteen counties presented their best resources: Kearny County entered a 183-pound pumpkin, Ness County won a prize for a small house constructed of native stone, and Finney County constructed a relief map with water flowing through a miniature river to highlight the county's irrigation system. Agricultural association members printed handbills that listed the premiums offered and circulated them in Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky and Missouri. They hired "Professor" Henry Worrell to build an arched entrance gate of millet, broom corn, wheat, oats and sorghum.<sup>20</sup>

In 1866 when the Kansas State Agricultural Society renewed state fairs after the Civil War, bidding continued to determine the host community. The Lawrence Fair Association outbid Garnett in 1866. In 1867 Lawrence won again; in 1868 it was Leavenworth; in 1869 Lawrence; 1870, Fort Scott; and between 1871 and 1874, Topeka held the fair.

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<sup>19</sup>Stephen H. Long, in charge of exploring Kansas lands, published a map on which he called much of the Great Plains the "Great American Desert." He believed the area "uninhabitable by a people depending on agriculture for their subsistence." See Kenneth S. Davis, *Kansas: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1976), 24-5.

<sup>20</sup>A short biography of Worrell, written by Robert Taft, "The Pictorial Record of the Old West," is in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 14 (August 1946): 241-64. Though Worrell had no professional training, many of his early sketches appeared in publications such *Harper's Weekly*, showing scenes of early Kansas. Born in England, he trained as a glass cutter in Cincinnati and eventually moved to Topeka. Fairs organizers frequently called upon him to create gates, pictures, sketches, or displays such as the Kansas agricultural display at the 1876 Centennial Exposition.

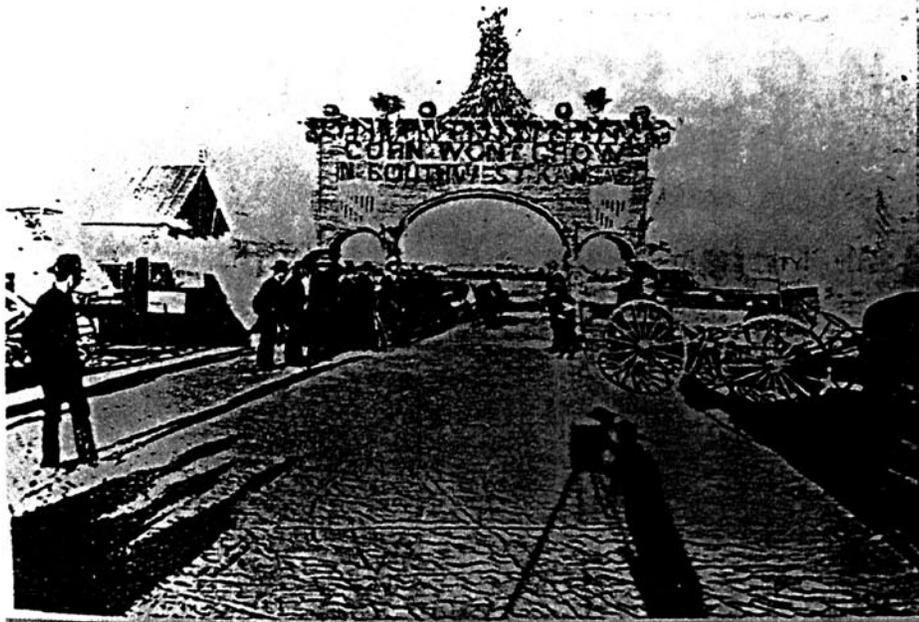


Figure 35. Finney County, Garden City, "Southwestern Kansas Exposition -- 1886." Gate by Henry Worrell. Kris Runberg, *Kanhistique* (October 1981): 6.



Figure 36. Finney County, Garden City, c. 1890,  
Southwest Kansas Exposition Produce Exhibit. KSHS Photo Collection.



Figure 37. Finney County, Garden City, c. 1890,  
Southwest Kansas Exposition. "I. L. Diesem's Home" Exhibit.  
KSHS Photo Collection.



Figure 38. Finney County, Garden City, c. 1890,  
Southwest Kansas Exposition Produce Exhibit. KSHS Photo Collection.

The look of the 1868 Leavenworth fairground is known because it was described in their bid.<sup>21</sup> The town promised:

1. 32 acres enclosed with a board fence,
2. One-half mile track,
3. Exhibit hall in the form of a cross,
4. Eating house (20' x 100'), with the second-story stand "full seated," and facing the exhibitions and judges stand (a kind of grandstand),
5. Society officer's quarters (12' x 30'),
6. Sheep and hog building (20' x 150'),
7. 150 stalls for stock, including 35 box stalls for race horses,
8. Band and judges' stand,
9. Treasurer's office,
10. Poultry building,
11. Springs (water) for stock, and an
12. Exhibit and test of three steam fire engines.

Leavenworth promised a recognized fairscape and the fire engine test promised entertainment. The premium list emphasized mostly livestock.

For the 1871 fair, Topeka's agricultural society promised to build a race track from guidelines published in *Wilkes Spirit of the Times*.<sup>22</sup> With a track laid out to specification, it would lure racing entrants looking for competition. Figure 39 is Henry Worrell's sketch of this 1871 fairground. The site has an oval race track and a circle "show" ring, both with grandstands. The following features were present:

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<sup>21</sup>*Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of Kansas for the Year 1873*, 44-5. This exhibit hall may have been the first cross-shaped fair building in Kansas.

<sup>22</sup>*Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of Kansas for the Year 1873*, 52. *Wilkes Spirit of the Times*, a "Chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports, Literature and the Stage," was once called *Porter's Spirit of the Times*; both focused on trotting. The publication was aimed at gentlemen who had time for hunting, fishing, fashion and theater. It also printed poetry and covered diverse items such as court proceedings.

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. Railroad access                                    | 7. Poultry building    |
| 2. Windmill   | 8. Farm tools building |
| 3. Camping facilities <sup>23</sup>                   | 9. Controlled access   |
| 4. High board fence                                   | 10. Carriage drive     |
| 5. Sheds (fence is one side) for cattle<br>and Horses | 11. Judges' stand      |
| 6. Two Greek cross buildings                          | 12. Show ring          |
|   | 13. Race track         |

Figure 40 is an inside view of the north wing of Floral Hall in 1879. Worrell sketched this when Exodusters (former slaves after the Civil War who made the "exodus" out of the South in 1879-1881) used the hall as a place to stay. The building appears to have had minimal framing, with just a few diagonal braces. The walls were clad with vertical boards that ran from sill to plate. The roof also had a minimal rafter system but again bracing probably made the building more stable than the sketch implies. Worrell's interpretation of the interior gives an approximation of the floor space; one can see a center display aisle, shelving and a display table. Figure 41, derived from Worrell's sketch, represents a section of the cross arm. There is inconsistency between his two sketches though; the outside of the Floral Hall shows windows and the inside shows none.

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<sup>23</sup>Premium books for Kansas fairs frequently mention areas for camping although maps or historical photos rarely show it. Perhaps it was an expected amenity and therefore received little attention.

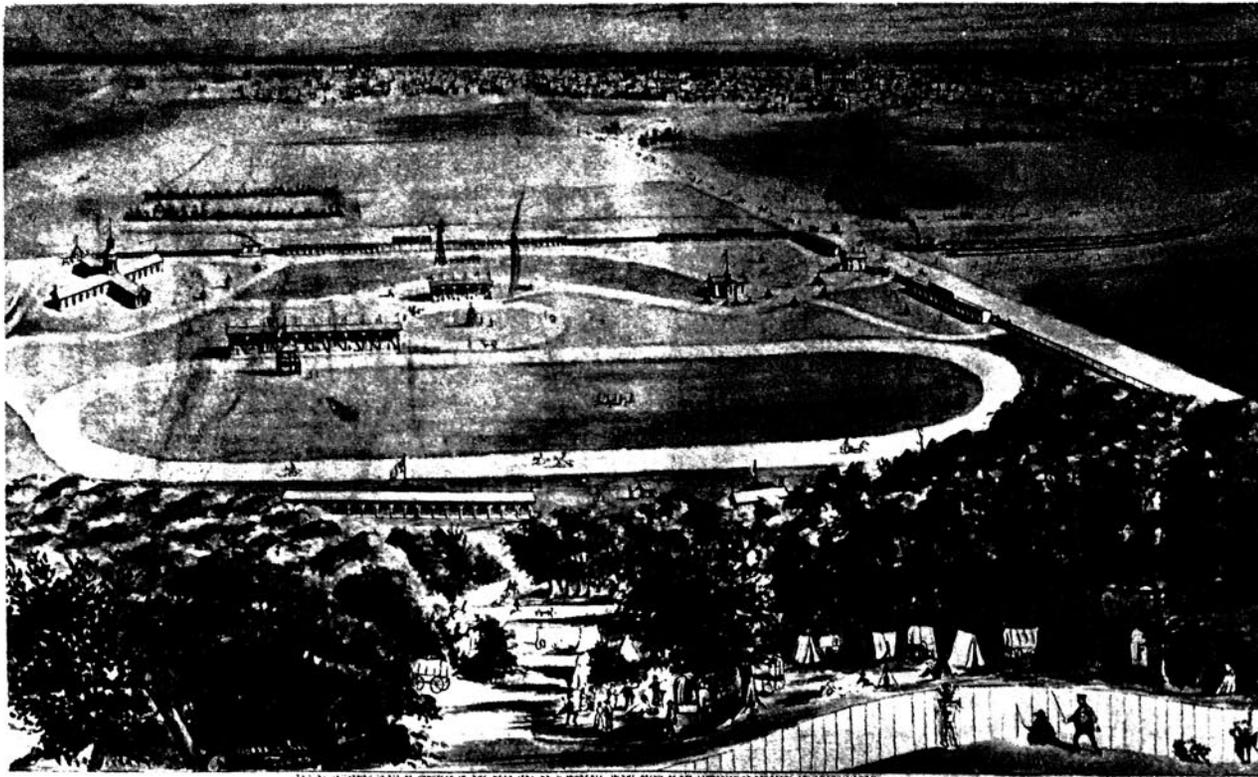


Figure 39. Shawnee County, Topeka, 1871 Sketch by Henry Worrell.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

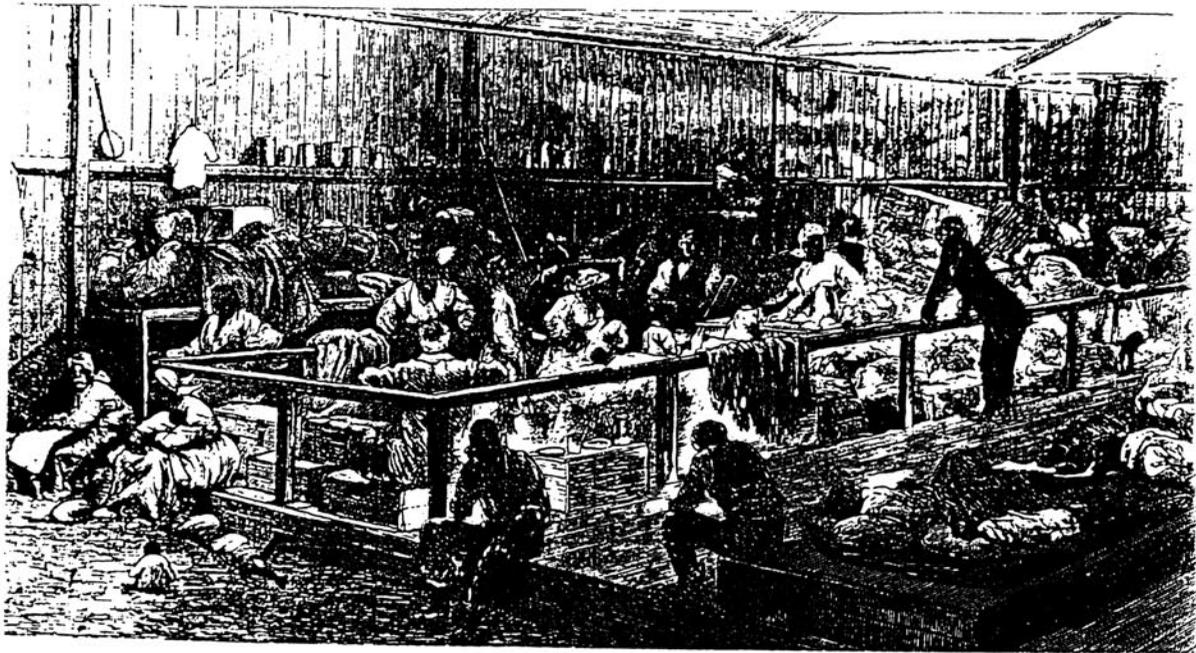


Figure 40. Cross-Shaped Floral Hall, Topeka Fairgrounds, 1879.  
Robert Taft, "The Pictorial Record of the Old West," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 14 (August 1946), interleaf between 256 and 257.

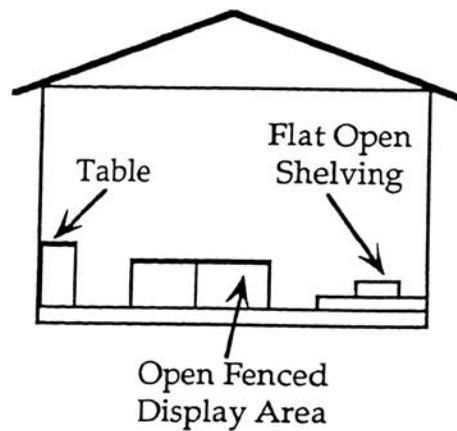


Figure 41. Section of Cross Arm.

Compare the buildings in Worrell's sketches to Figures 42 and 43, the two exposition buildings in Kansas City, Missouri, described in *Kansas Farmer* articles from 1874 and 1875. This fair's buildings represented the best of fair architecture and Main Hall's features appear derived from the Crystal Palace.<sup>24</sup>

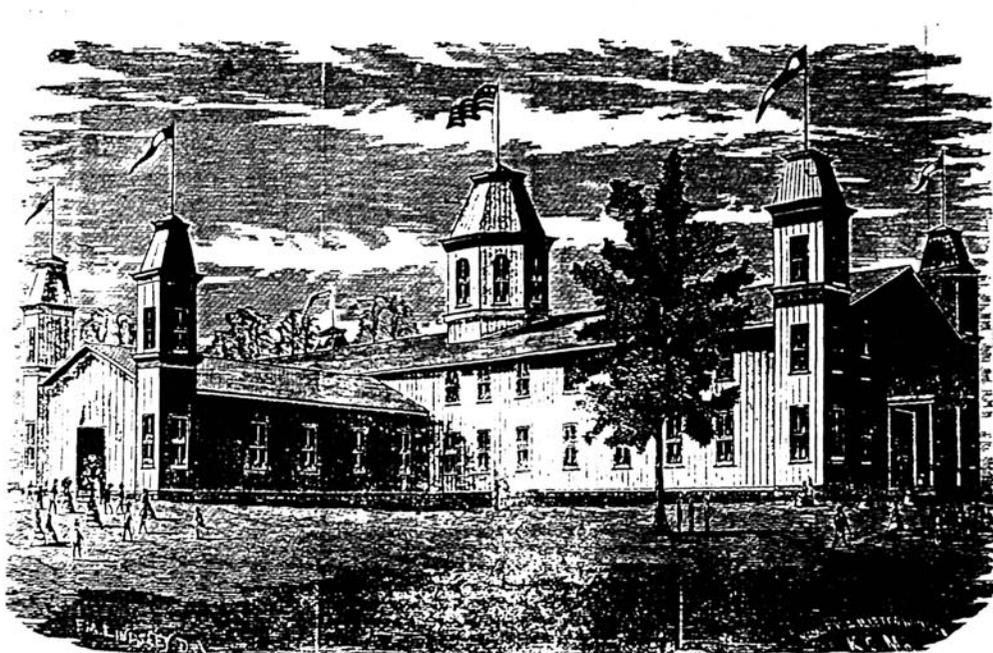


Figure 42. Main Hall, Kansas City Fairgrounds, 1874.  
*Kansas Farmer* (August 12, 1876): 253.

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<sup>24</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 12 (August 12, 1874): 253, and 13 (August 11, 1875): 253.

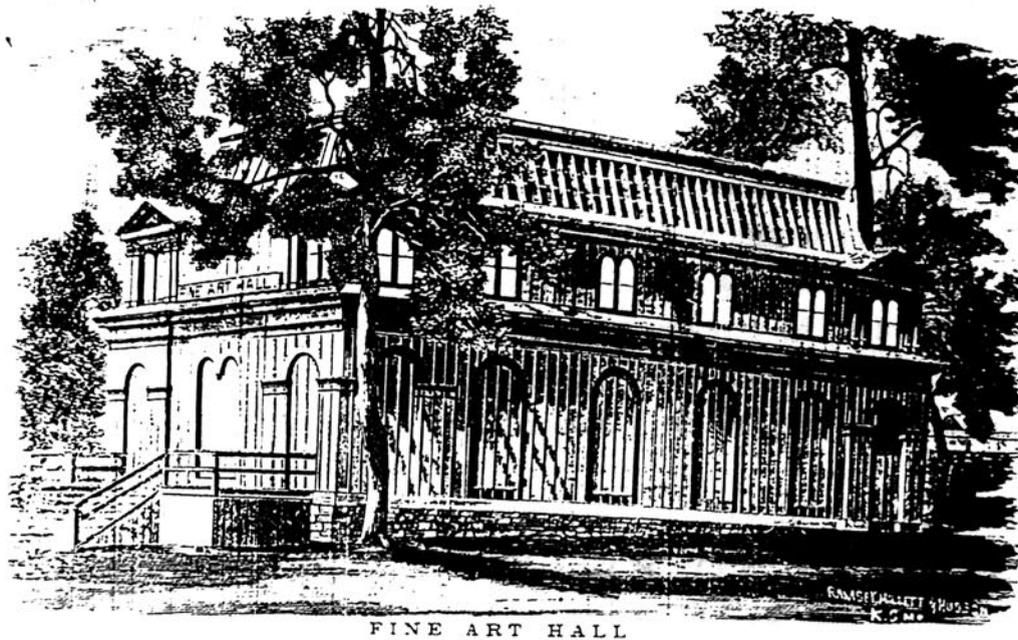


Figure 43. Fine Arts Hall, Kansas City Fairgrounds, 1875. *Kansas Farmer* (August 11, 1875): 253.

Topeka's two crosses in Figure 39 are similar to Kansas City's Main Hall, but Main Hall is a closer copy of the Crystal Palace with towered nave ends. Topeka's crosses appear to be one story, but Main Hall had a two-story nave, 180' x 70', and the two smaller cross naves that were 60' x 40'.<sup>25</sup> On both Main Hall and the large Topeka cross, the Crystal Palace's circular dome was transformed into a hexagonal cupola.<sup>26</sup> Builders probably

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<sup>25</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 12 (August 12, 1874): 253. The building was used for manufacturing and textile exhibits and agricultural and horticultural products.

<sup>26</sup>The smaller Topeka cross nearer the middle of the photo appears to have a simple gable roof with a flag pole on top.

found linear sides easier to build, yet they retained the right look. All of the buildings were fabricated with wood and clad with vertical siding.

The Fine Arts Hall would have been at home on almost any Eastern fairground. Promoters associated the building's design with "displaying most favorably Pictures, Statuary and all other classes in this Department." In other words, they equated the building's design with its refined contents.<sup>27</sup> Its reference to the neoclassical temple is compromised, though, especially by a roof that makes the building eclectic in appearance. It appears to have a clerestory, but terminates in a hipped roof, not a gable form. The proportions of the horizontal layers appear randomly rather than classically derived. Regardless, it retains enough of the look of earlier fair buildings that its builders probably were content with the effect. Worrell's sketch shows that the Topeka grounds had no building as elaborate as the Fine Arts Hall.

For fairs such as Kansas City's, county boosters brought a wide variety of products to display.<sup>28</sup> For the Southwest Kansas Exposition, Ellis County citizens arranged an exhibit of sod and broom corn, Hungarian grass, peanuts, pumpkins, squashes and melons. Grouped to show off a bounty of products, they included exploitable natural resources such as limestone and salt.<sup>29</sup> Figure 44 is Riley County's display for the 1880 Western National Fair in Lawrence. The exhibit contained fruits,

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<sup>27</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 12 (August 12, 1874): 253.

<sup>28</sup>Not just counties used fairs as promotional tools. The Kansas Immigration Society was a state wide booster group that entered displays especially at fairs in other states. This group was intent on confirming "the industry and intelligence of the[ir] country." See the *Kansas Farmer* 4 (November 1867): 174; *Kansas Farmer* 8 (December 1871): 183; and *Kansas Farmer* 14 (September 20, 1876): 320.

<sup>29</sup>Owsley, *History of Early Kansas Agricultural Societies*, 30.

vegetables, limestone, and wildlife.<sup>30</sup> The Western National Fair's Agricultural Hall was once named the County Display Building and provided space for these county booster exhibits. Such displays were nearly the same from county to county, so prizes were usually awarded on artistic arrangement instead of the quality of the items.

Although early state fairs also promoted Kansas, the State Agricultural Society held its last fair in 1871. In 1872 the legislature finally established a public board, the Kansas State Board of Agriculture (KSBA). The old private society had served the state well, for its members promoted the state and acted in official capacities at various levels of government. The group also helped reestablish Eastern precedents in Kansas state fairs in activities and fairsapes.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 18 (September 22, 1880): 300. Counties exhibiting besides Riley were Wyandotte, Douglas, Linn, Cherokee, Montgomery, Clay, Trego and Wallace.

<sup>31</sup>Patronage by Kansas gentleman farmers is evident not only in those who organized fairs, but also in who won the prizes. Alfred Gray's Berkshire hogs won top honors at the 1870 fair in Ft. Scott. (Owsley, *History of Early Kansas Agricultural Societies*, 27-30.)

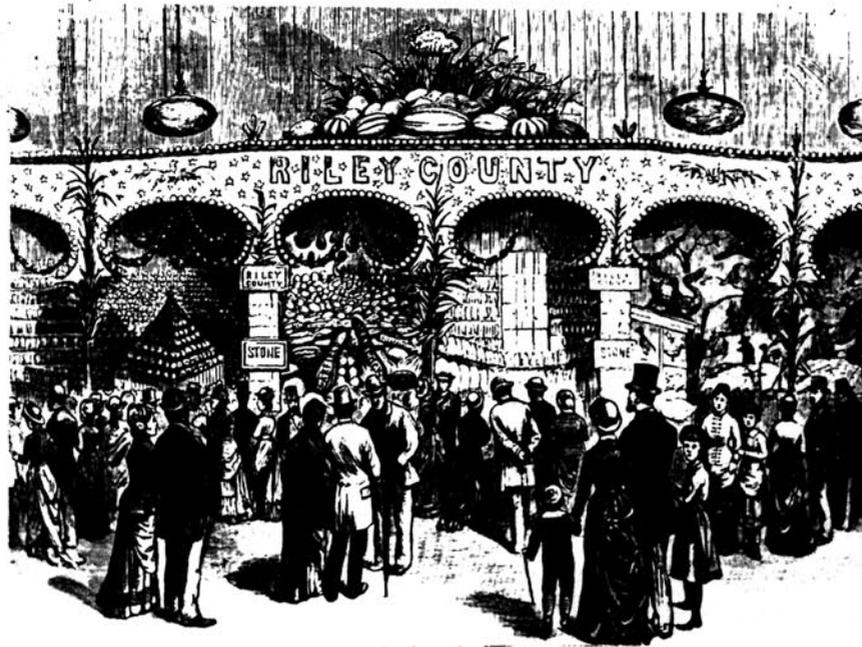


Figure 44. Riley County Exhibit at the Western National Fair, Bismarck Grove. KSHS Photo Collection.

The new KSBA sponsored its first state fair in 1873, but in 1874, grasshoppers invaded and difficult times followed for the state's residents. The Board decided to sponsor a fair anyway, because its members feared that calling it off would frighten potential immigrants. But after 1874, the Board ended its support for any further state fairs, claiming that they were only incidental to its job.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>I. D. Graham, "The Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Some Highlights of History," *Kansas Historical Collections* 17 (1926-1920): 792. The board gave several reasons for discontinuing the state fair but the reasons contradicted one another. They claimed, for example, that local fairs detracted from a statewide perspective, but also argued the state fair detracted from county fairs. Members also grumbled that state fairs took too much time and money to set up, they were poor business prospects,

Despite dropping support for a state fair, the KSBA continued other activities started by Kansas State Agricultural Society. For example, the old society reported its yearly activities to the House of Representatives and the new Board continued the process and published annual reports with data on counties. A state law facilitated the collecting and reporting of this data, for it required county clerks to provide the Board with information on agriculture, horticulture, and livestock.<sup>33</sup> The new Board also kept up the old society's booster activities, for it supplied the collected statistics to prospective settlers much as the Kansas Emigration Society had done. Like a chamber of commerce today, the Board handled requests for information about the state.

The State Agricultural Board took its place as the state's promoter and helped the Board of Centennial Managers to prepare for the Kansas display at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. Many Kansans felt the state needed to join the national celebration especially after the 1873 depression, and the ruinous and well-publicized grasshopper invasion. To counter any dark stains on the state's already dubious and "droughty" reputation, the legislature allocated about 4 percent of their entire year's budget to prepare for the exposition.<sup>34</sup>

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and they focused on horse racing too much. Thomas C. Percy in "Blowing the Whistle on the Kansas State Fair." unpublished paper, 1993, 3, has argued it is obvious the Kansas State Board of Agriculture was more interested in creating interest in Kansas through exhibitions outside of the state rather than within at state fairs.

<sup>33</sup>*Laws of Kansas 1879* (Dassler), Chapter 23, Article 21, Section 172 (St. Louis: W. J. Gilbert, Publisher), 244. This law took affect March 29, 1873.

<sup>34</sup>Homer E. Socolofsky, "The Agricultural Heritage," in *Rise of the Wheat State*, eds. George E. Ham and Robin Higham (Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 1987), 26. Also see Kenneth S. Davis, *Kansas: A History*, 122. Apparently neither the locust invasion nor the depression affected settlement very long. Between 1870 and 1880, Kansas population nearly tripled going from 364,400 to 996,100.

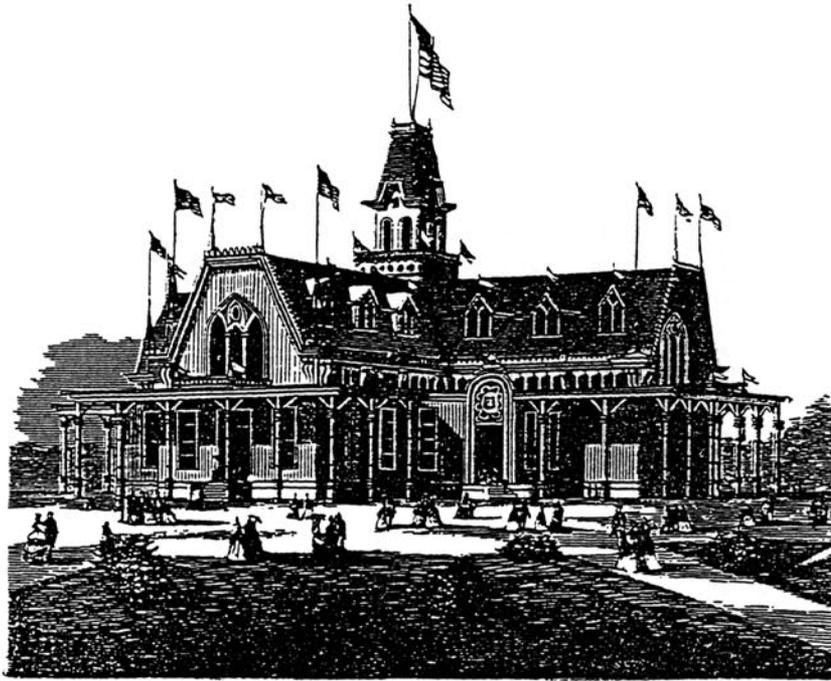
Also see Reid Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), 21. Badger, in a review of fairs prior to the Chicago exhibition,

At Philadelphia, Kansas shared a building with Colorado (see Figures 45 and 46). Designed by architect E. T. Carr of Leavenworth, the building was a large gothic wood-framed version of the Crystal Palace.<sup>35</sup> Figure 47 shows its cross form. Between the arms were small triangles to complete the combination of cross and octagon. The building was surrounded on the outside by a wide gallery. Although the 1876 KSBA report did not fully describe the building, its construction appears to be similar to the Kansas City fair buildings with wooden vertical siding.

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claimed that not many attended the Philadelphia fair west of the Alleghenies because of the distance, transportation and cost. But Kansas expended money and effort for this exhibition, which indicates they expected something in return.

<sup>35</sup>"Report of the Centennial Managers," *Fifth Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Year Ending November 30, 1876* (Topeka: Geo. W Martin, Public Printer, 1877): 211. "Gothic" is used by the report to describe the building, and perhaps it was based on the design of the windows. The building is, however, eclectic.



COLORADO AND KANSAS BUILDING.

Figure 45. Kansas and Colorado Building, 1876 Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia. James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*. (Philadelphia: Jones Brothers & Co., 1876), 676.

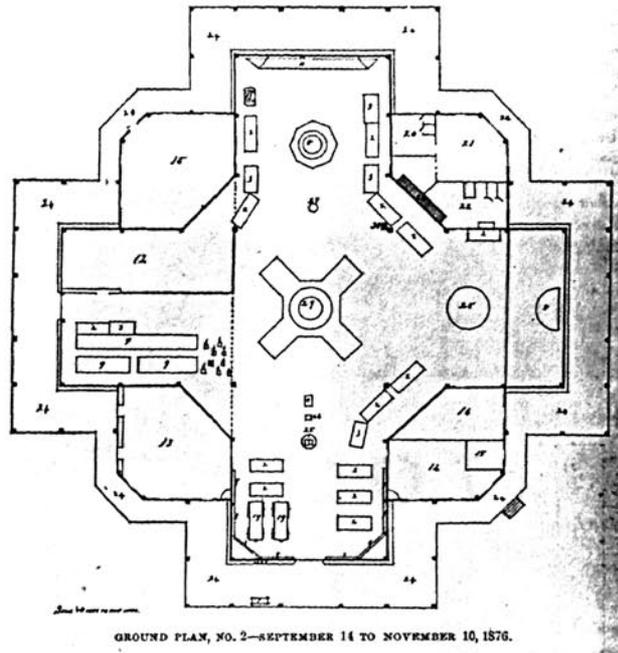
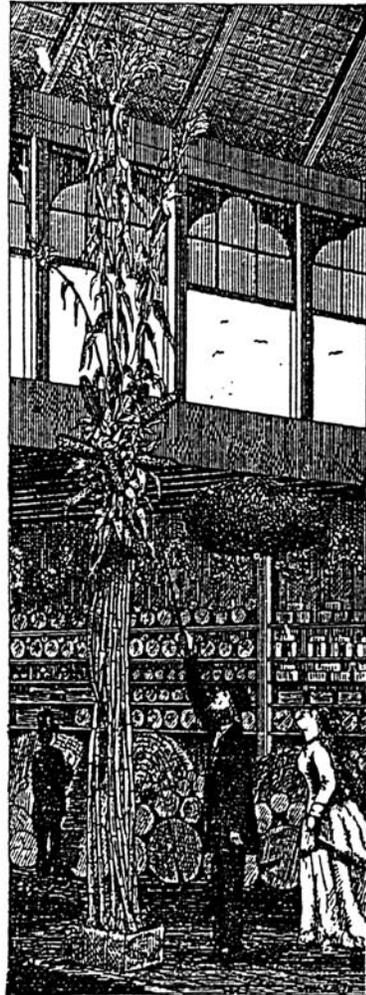


Figure 46. Ground Plan of the Kansas and Colorado Building, 1876 Philadelphia. "Centennial Exposition, Report of the Centennial Managers," *Fifth Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Year Ending November 30, 1876* (Topeka, Geo. W. Martin, Public Printer, 1877), 244.

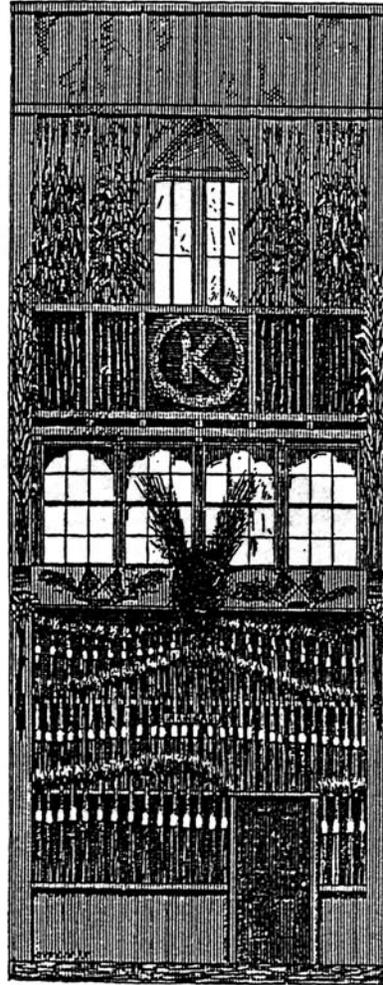
The Centennial Managers hired Henry Worrell, who had drawn the 1869 sketch of "Doughty Kansas," to compose an artistic display of crops. He built a large centennial bell from grains and grasses and hung it over a small capitol building made of fruit. The Board also displayed minerals, birds, insects, timber, stone, and silk. A large map of the state on one of the walls included agricultural products labeled so visitors could tell which part of the state they were from. Figure 47 shows examples of what Kansas sent: wheat, 5' to 6' tall; corn, 13' to 17' tall; oats, 10' tall; broom corn, 18' tall; and grasses, 10' tall.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*, 673-7.



HILL OF CORN, KANSAS DISPLAY.



SECTION OF WALL-SPACE, NORTH WING KANSAS BUILDING.

Figure 47. Kansas Corn 1876. "Centennial Exhibition, Report of the Centennial Managers," *Fifth Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Year Ending November 30, 1876* (Topeka, Geo. W. Martin, Public Printer, 1877), 260-61.

This exposition, however, provided few new architectural trends that would be carried forward in local fairs. The Kansas building looked like many others at the Exposition based on similar cross plans. Figures 48 and 49 show tradition rather than innovation in the Women's Pavilion and the U. S. Government Building.

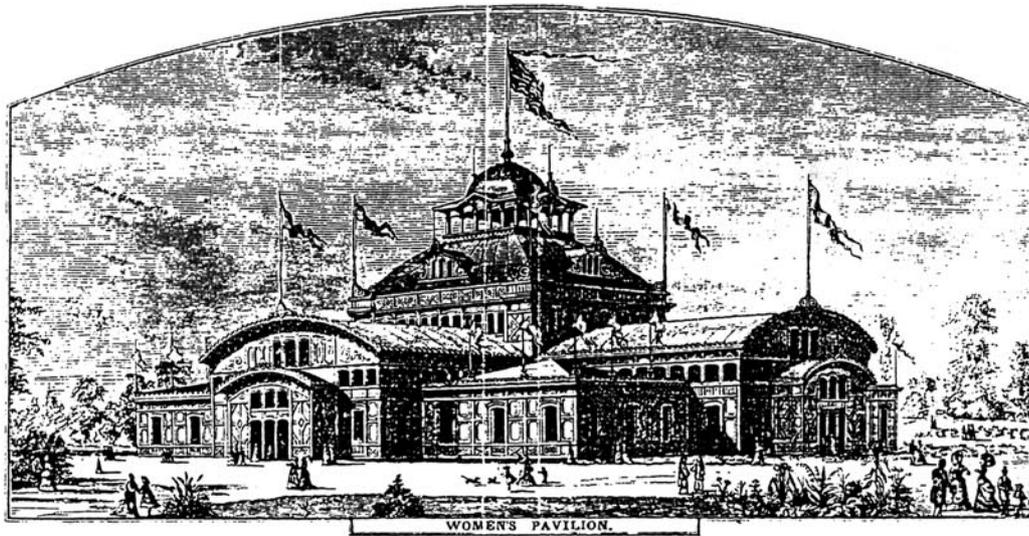
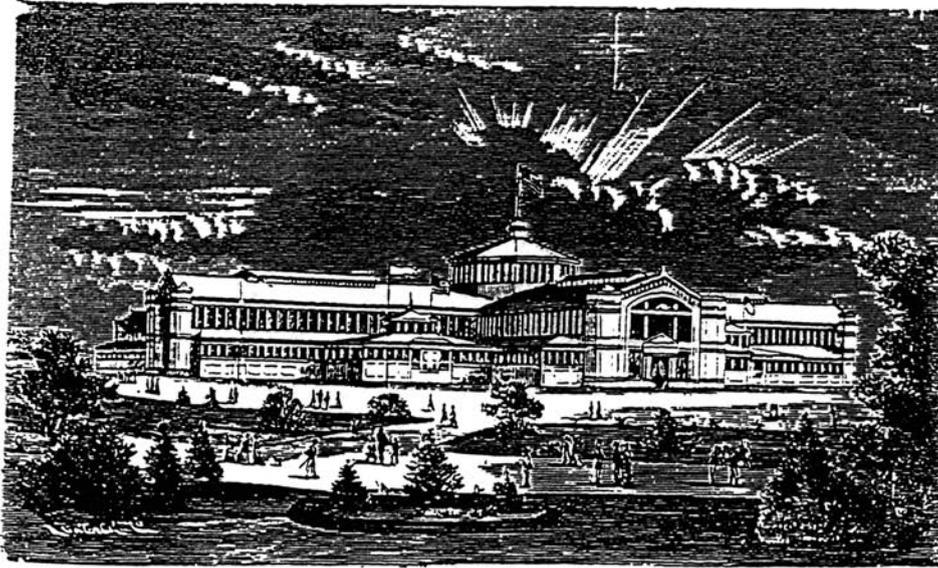


Figure 48. Women's Pavilion 1876 Centennial Exposition.  
James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*.  
(Philadelphia: Jones Brothers & Co., 1876), 655.



GOVERNMENT BUILDING.

Figure 49. U. S. Government Building 1876 Centennial Exposition. James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*. (Philadelphia: Jones Brothers & Co., 1876), 608.

Guide books for the 1876 Exposition describe the various halls in detail, but there is scant information about the livestock buildings. The twenty-acre grounds were about 500 yards away from the main enclosure. The area was fenced and had twenty-nine frame buildings, each 170' x 14'. Figure 50 shows the livestock buildings as plain wooden, gable-front structures. By 1876, this simple building form was in use almost everywhere for livestock exhibits, although fairs also used uncovered stalls or shed accommodations. There apparently were only two other structures in the livestock area, square, hip-roofed, open judging pavilions.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 770-71.



Figure 50. Stock Yard 1876 Centennial Exposition.  
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 43 (September 30, 1876): 57.

Equal in importance to such exhibit structures, were the amusements and concessions housed in inexpensive tents and buildings. These diversions increased later at Kansas fairs, for their presence around an event such as the Centennial Exhibition gave them a kind of implicit validation. While the 1876 Centennial Exposition influenced Kansas fairs, it served mainly to strengthened trends already in place from earlier decades of fairscape evolution. A special pavilion, for example, displayed women's work, especially the artistic and refined, much as the ladies' homes had at New York fairs. By hosting women's activities but separating them from men's, the fair limited direct competition and comparison between the sexes.

The exposition was also the first opportunity after the Civil War for blacks as freed men and women to contribute to such a national fair. Regardless of their interest in participating, they were excluded from

helping in any significant way. Black women protested against the treatment they received as part of a separate Women's Centennial Committee, but it did little good.<sup>38</sup> Native Americans fared no better. The exposition offered an opportunity to acquaint the public with Indian cultures but the display, collected by whites, made it seem as if the Native Americans who made the pieces had already disappeared.<sup>39</sup> The displays emphasized exhibit pieces as curiosities, much in the same way that earlier fairs had displayed items from museums' cabinets of curiosities. The treatment of both blacks and Native Americans would be no better at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in part because of the precedent set at the 1876 Philadelphia fair.

The *Kansas Farmer* and the yearly KSBA reports profiled major expositions like Philadelphia's, and the state's traditional-era county fairs. These sources relate what these fairs generally looked like and what agricultural societies were most proud of. The following list of fairscape characteristics is typical and can be seen in the Figures 51 through 71. Compare the list to maps, photos and drawings of county fairsapes which show many of the same basic features. These patterns dominated in Kansas into the early twentieth century.

1. Gable-roofed, rectangular, octagonal or Greek cross forms.
2. Trotting race tracks frequently oval, 1/2 mile. A judges stand near the track facing a grandstand.
3. High board fencing, or sometimes hedge, stone, wire or picket, with a main gate for entry fee collection.
4. Running water in streams, springs or wells.
5. Wooden stalls and pens for livestock and poultry.
6. Permanent site, nearby town. Sometimes sites were rented, or loaned by county or railroads to fair organizers.
7. Near a railroad line.
8. Park or grove setting.

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<sup>38</sup>Foner, "Black Participation at the Centennial of 1876," 534.

<sup>39</sup>Trennert, "A Grand Failure: The Centennial Indian Exhibition of 1876," 129.

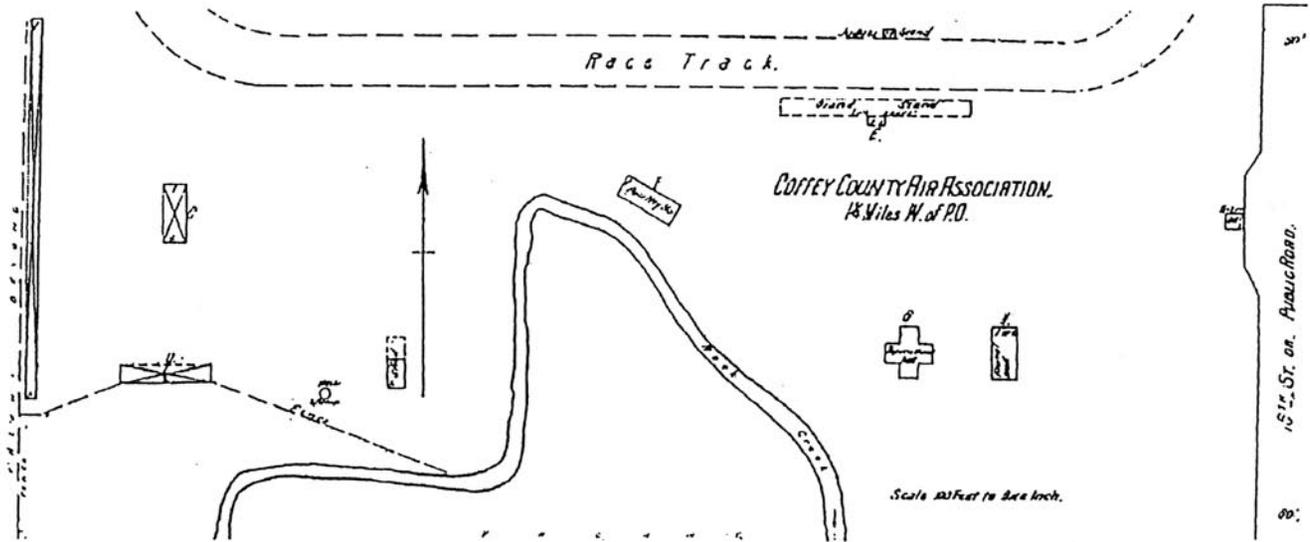


Figure 51. Coffey County, Burlington. 1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

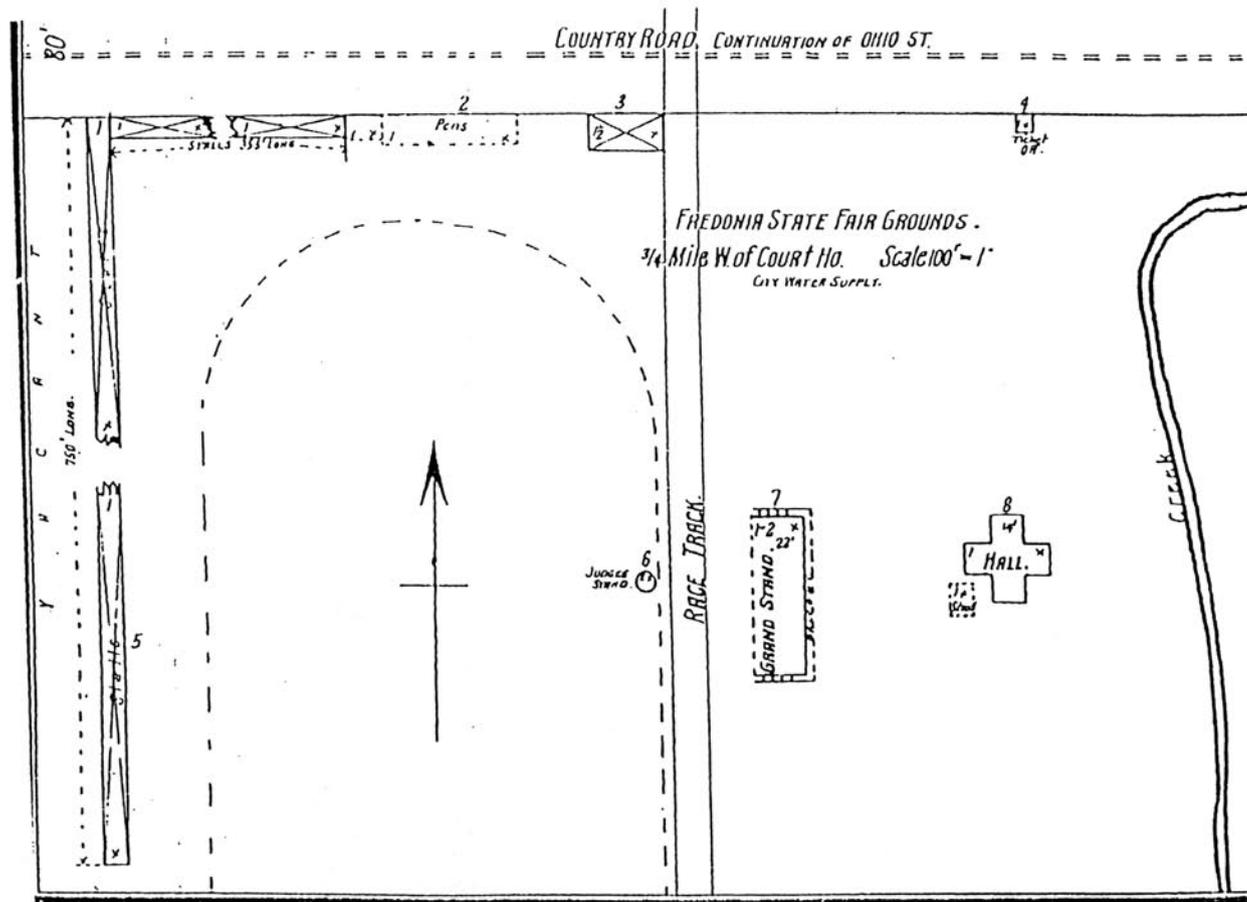


Figure 52. Wilson County, Fredonia,  
1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

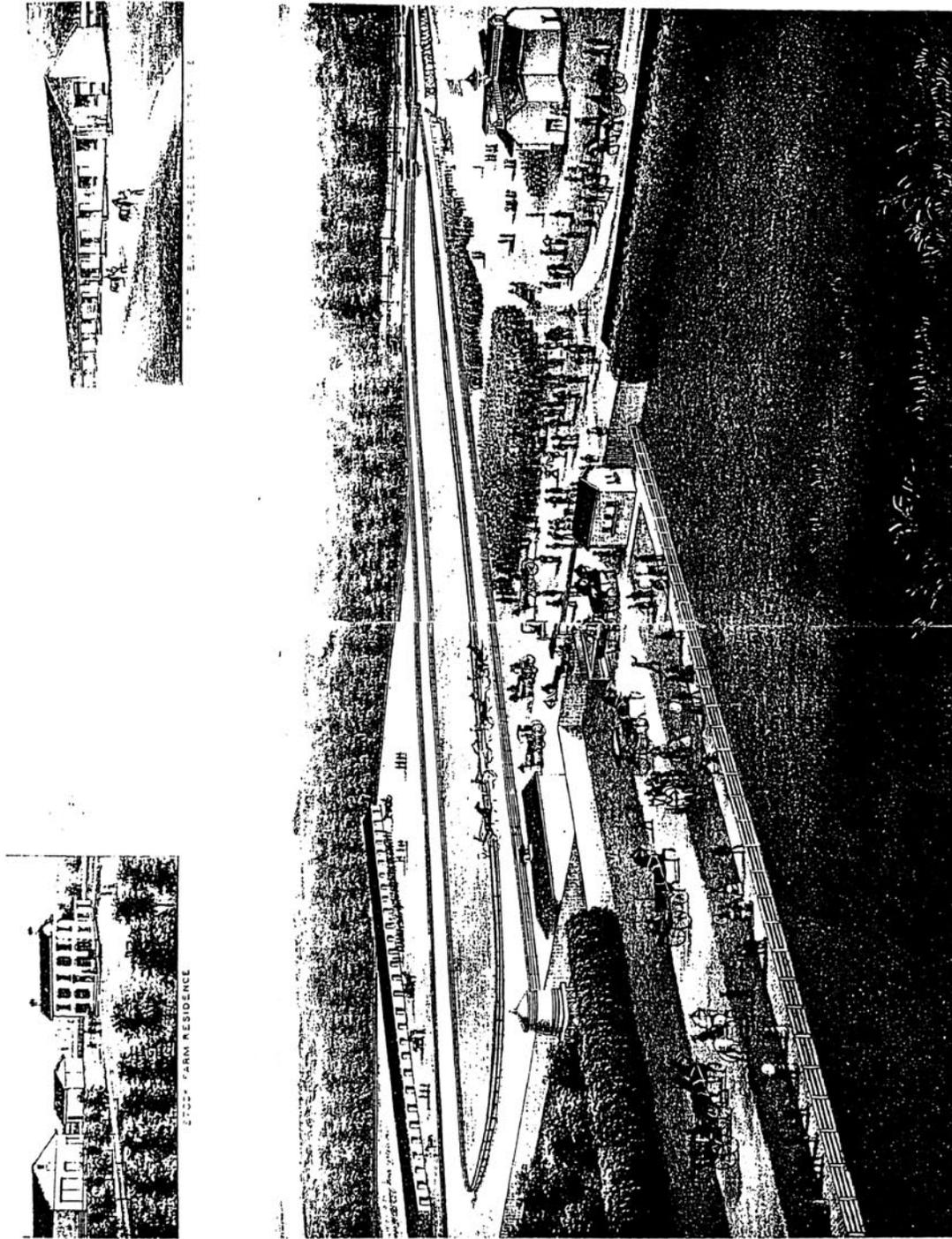


Figure 53. Lyon County, Emporia. Western Driving and Exhibition Park, 1887. *The Official State Atlas of Kansas* (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts & Company, 1887), interleaf between 150 and 151.

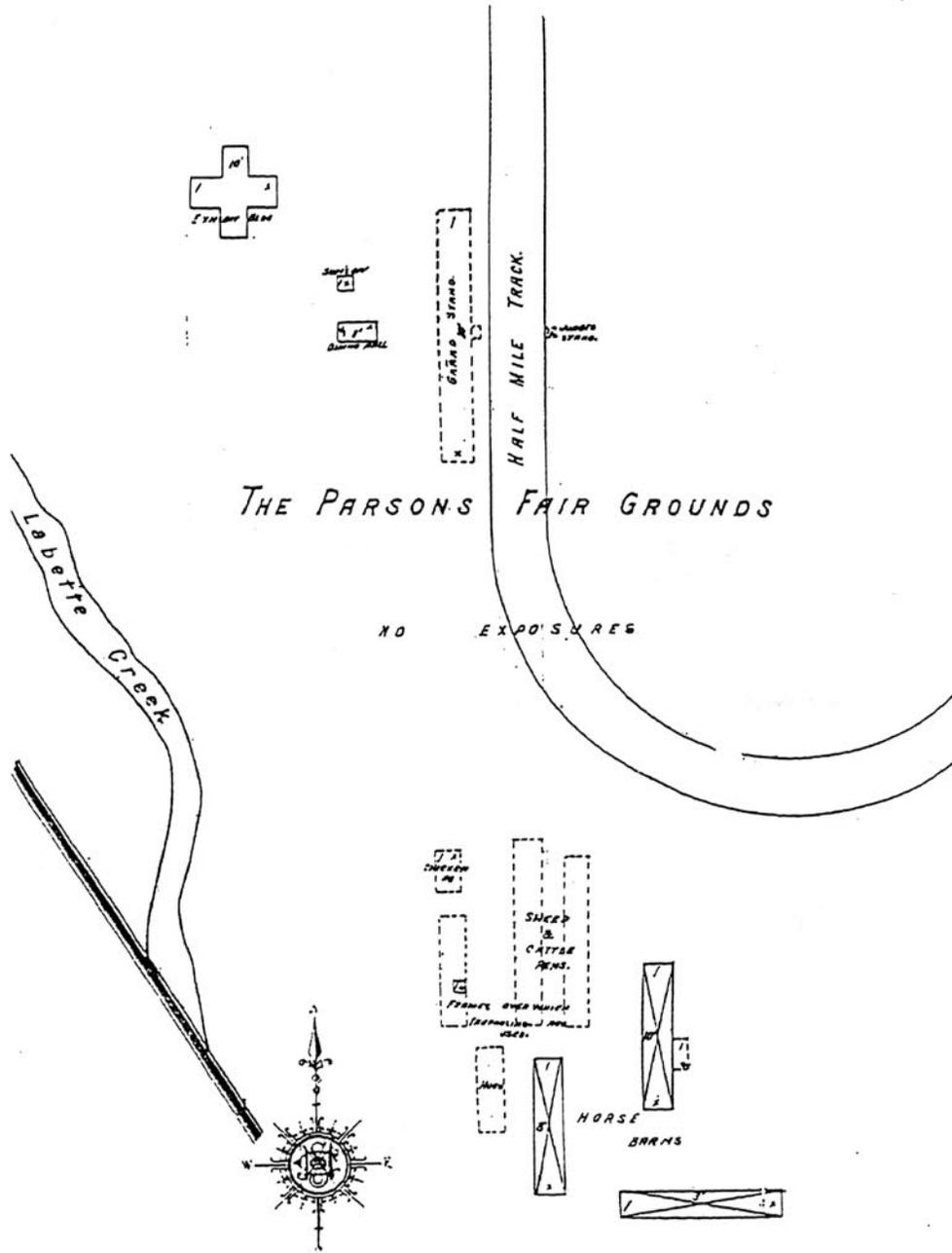


Figure 54. Labette County, Parsons.  
1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

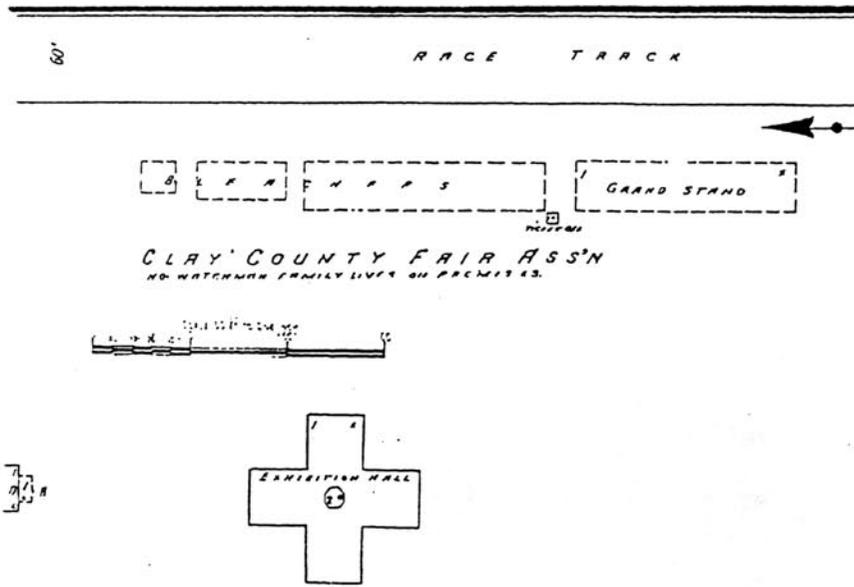


Figure 55. Clay County, Clay Center.  
1911 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

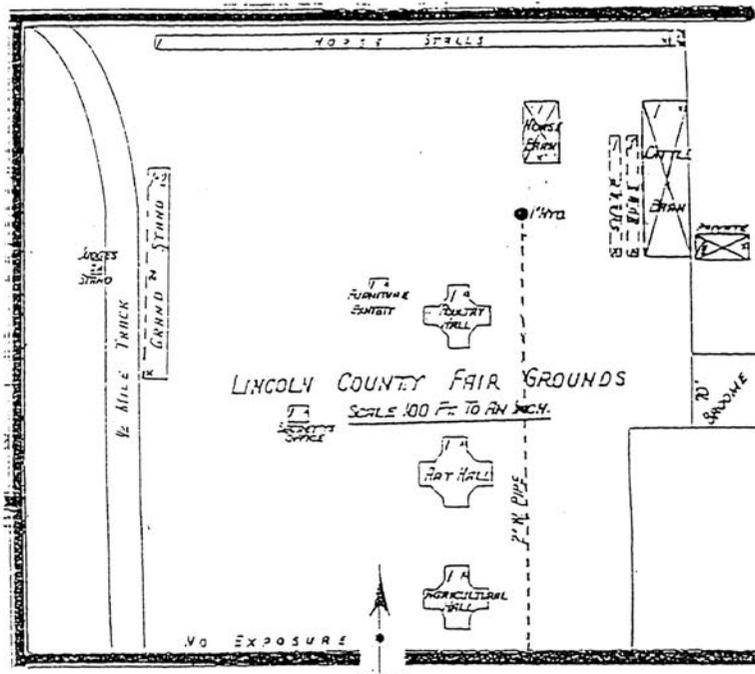


Figure 56. Lincoln County, Lincoln.  
1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.



Figure 57. Republic County, Belleville, 1909.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

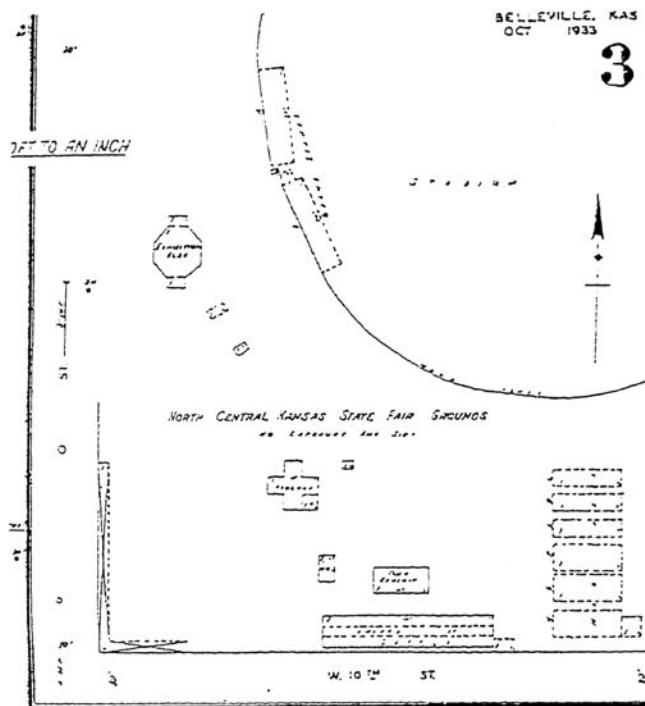


Figure 58. Republic County, Belleville.  
1911 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

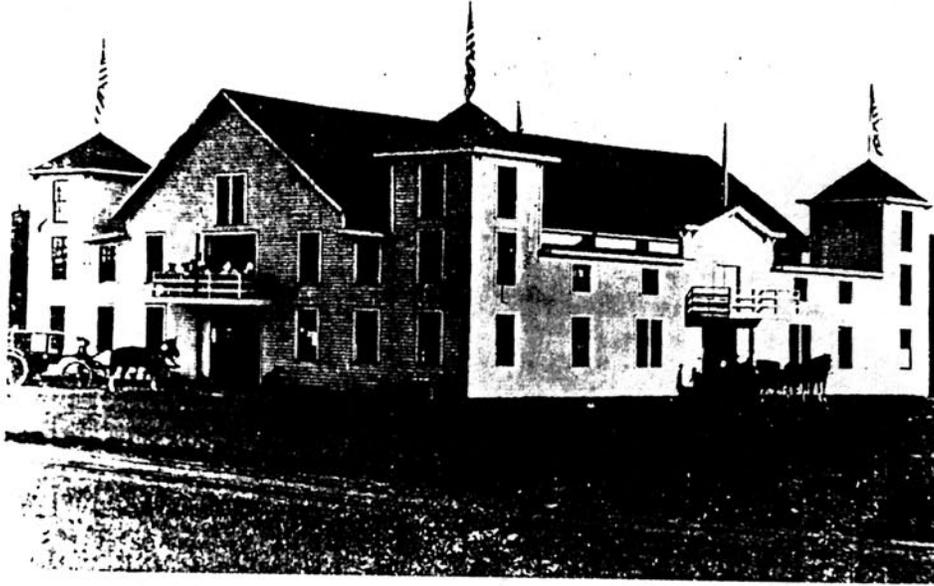


Figure 59. Dickinson County Agricultural Hall, Abilene, c. 1912.  
Courtesy of the Dickinson County Historical Society.

Interiors were open and painted white to make them as light as possible, although made of wood instead of cast iron and glass. Some even had a second story promenade, as did the Crystal Palace.



Figure 60. Shawnee County Agricultural Building, Topeka, 1917.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

Of the state's older fair buildings derived from the Crystal Palace, mostly octagon shapes and clerestory or "monitor" roofed barns remain in the 1990s.



Figure 61. Marshall County, Blue Rapids, 1920s.  
Photo by author.

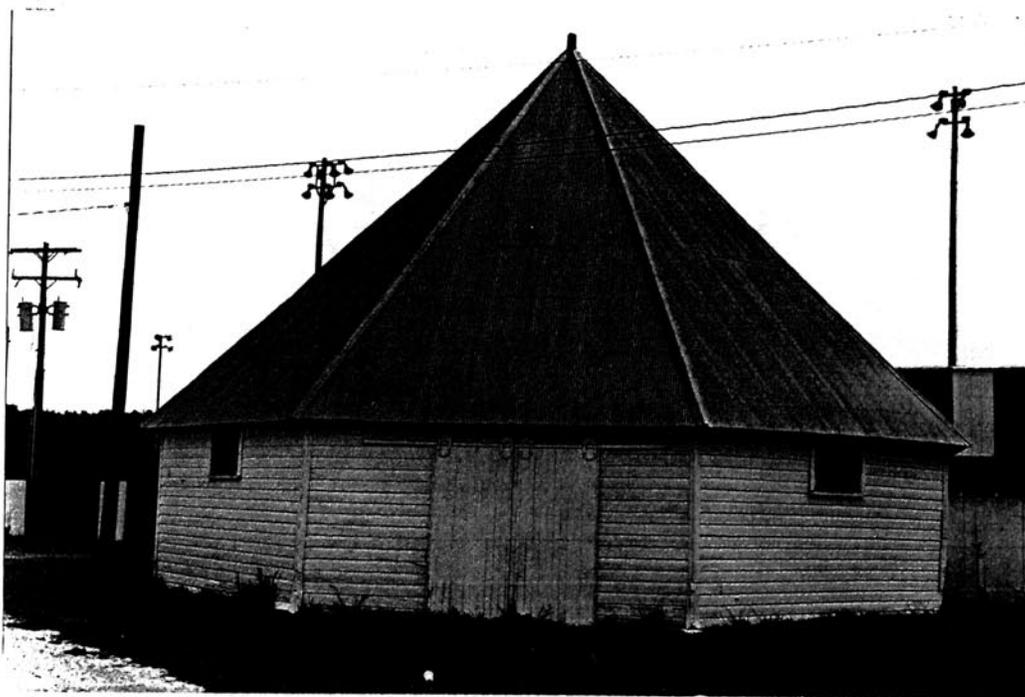


Figure 62. Lincoln County, Sylvan Grove, c. 1910.  
Photo by author.



Figure 63. Marshall County, Blue Rapids, 1910s.  
Photo by author.



Figure 64. Thomas County, Colby, 1910s.  
Photo by author.

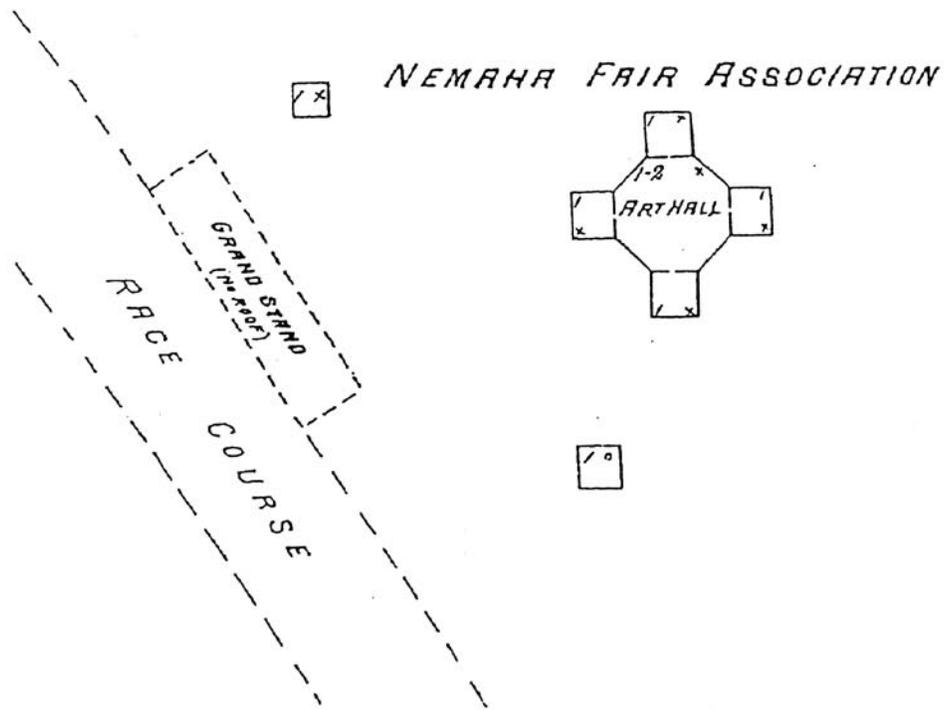


Figure 65. Nemaha County, Seneca. 1889 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.



Figure 66. Pottawatomie County, Onaga, 1910.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

A river or creek site often provided water for stock and offered a practical way of fencing. If a river was not nearby, fair associations dug wells. Fairgrounds with abundant shade gave relief from the summer sun and heat, and associations planted hundreds of trees if their site did not have them. Wooden pens were essential for stock exhibits. These sometimes were open-sided, barn-like structures or single-stall sheds (see Figure 67).

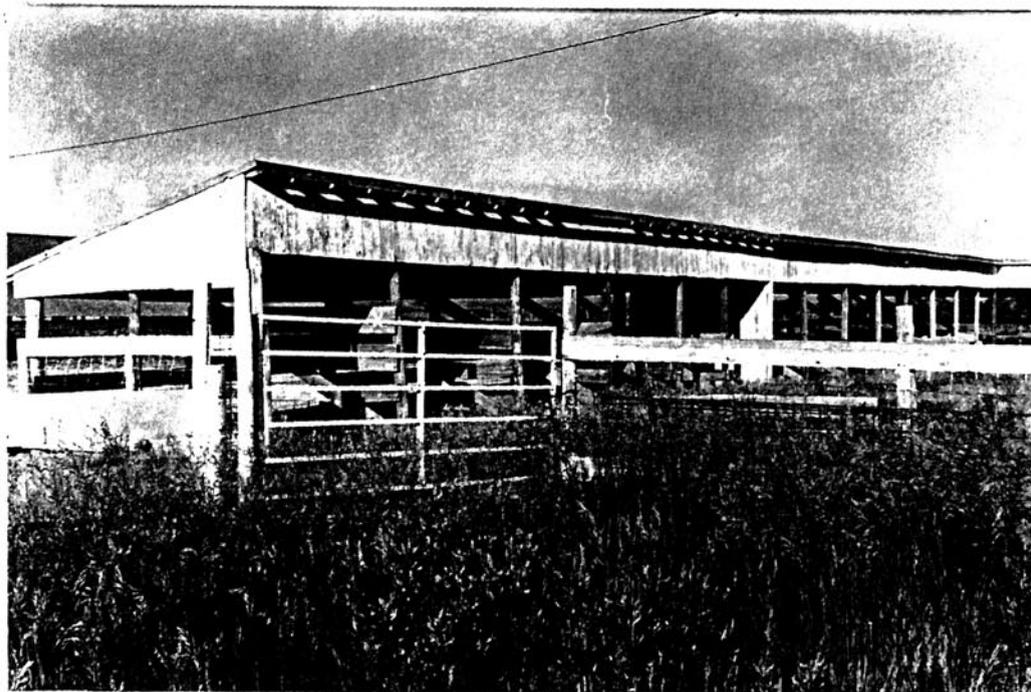


Figure 67. Decatur County, Oberlin. Photo by author.

The formula for successful race-track landscapes dictated a grandstand or amphitheater, and a judge's stand. A grandstand could serve a dual purpose: it provided seating for race spectators, and its backside opened for covered booth space. The judge's stand allowed officials to oversee the finish line and determine winners in close races.

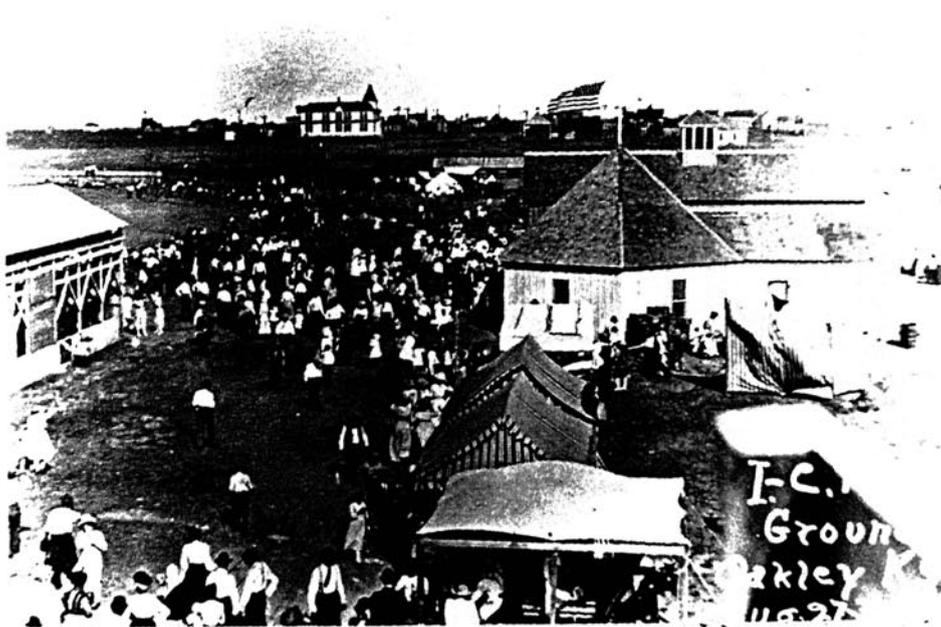


Figure 68. Logan County, Oakley, 1912.  
Courtesy of the Fick Fossil Museum.



Figure 69. Wilson County, Fredonia. Photo by author.

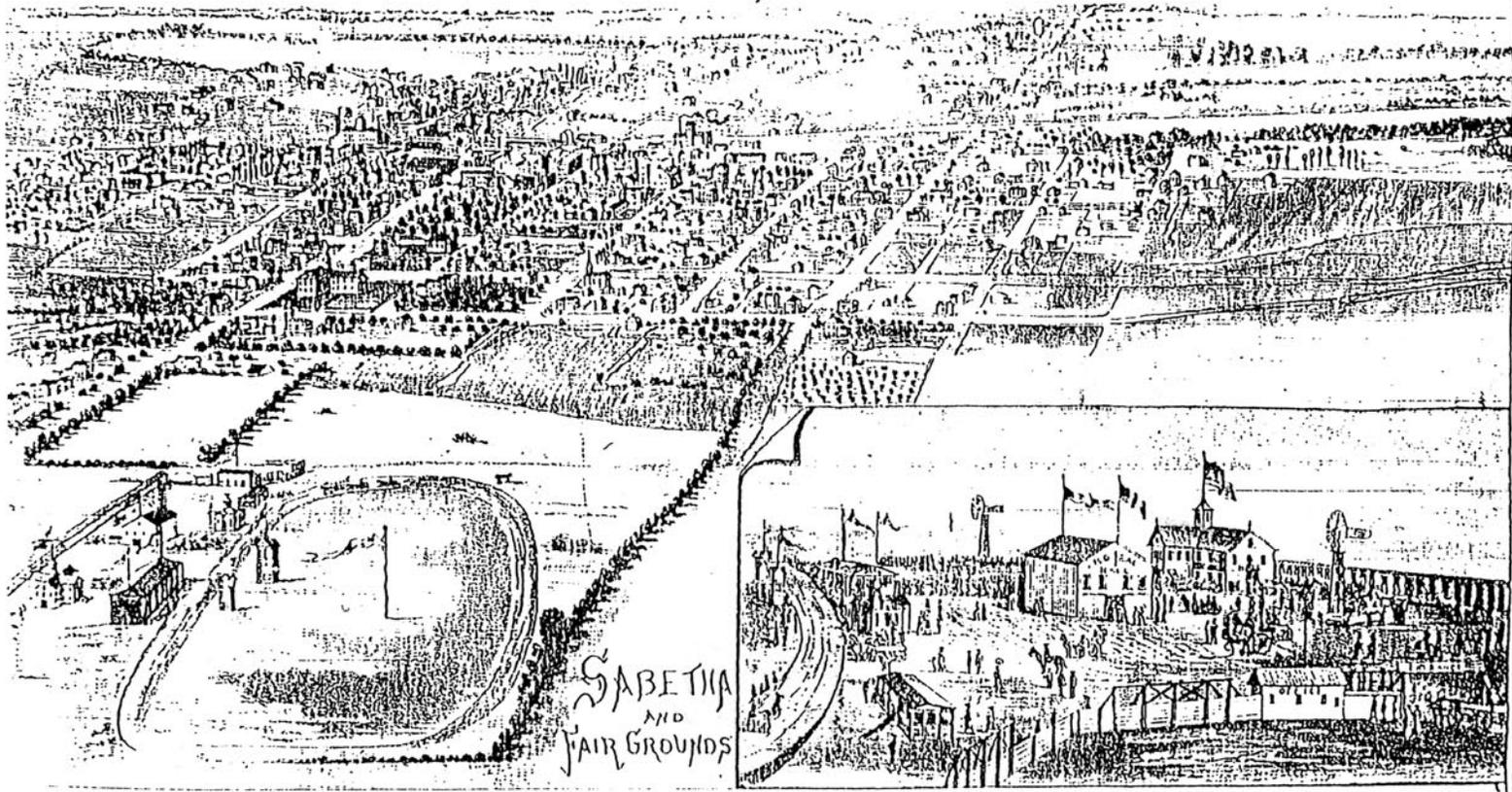


Figure 70. Nemaha County, Sabetha. *Mechams 1887 Illustrated Atlas of Brown and Nemaha Counties* (Sabetha: J. H. Meachams, 1887), 73.

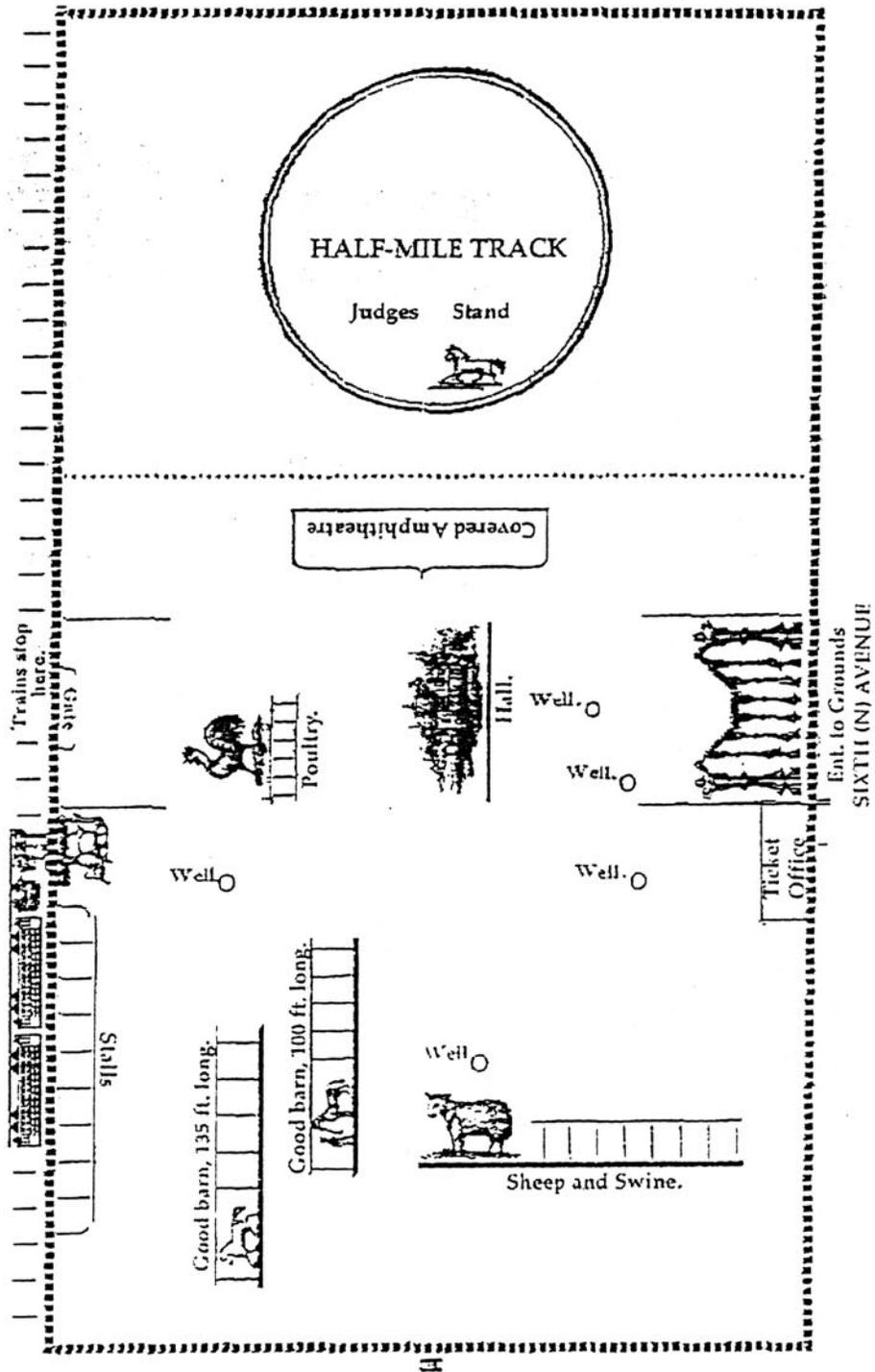


Figure 71. Lyon County Premium Book, 1881.  
 KSHS Premium Book Collection.

The only real differences between these figures and fairground patterns of the 1840s is that in Kansas county fairs associations clearly stressed the location of sites near water as many of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show. Associations also built mostly permanent halls and buildings.

Agricultural societies preferred permanent buildings to tents and they frequently went into debt to build them. In 1876, Brown County tried what they called the "tent system" and, although other societies derided it, the Brown County society argued that tents were practical because they could be used again and again.<sup>40</sup> Tents, however, remained the exception in the 1870s and 1880s, preferred only for stands, extra buildings or offices. Impermanence was the wrong message -- counties wanted to show abundance, wealth and stability.

Figures 72 and 73 show fairscape images in the 1890s, drawn as advertisements for the Franklin County fair in 1894. Although idealized, they implied the county had similar architecture and activities. Note the poster's buildings: elaborate, modified cross forms similar to Kansas's structure at the Centennial Exposition and other state-fair, cross-shaped halls. There are also open arcades, clerestories and monitor roofs, and cupolas. Prominently in the middle of the Figure 72, is the Livestock Department, a building whose end has a half-round window similar to one in the Crystal Palace. Octagon shapes serve for both buildings and refreshment stands. An ornate grandstand sits next to a race track where a trotting race is in progress in Figure 73, the "Speed Department." The figure reminded readers that proper contests, in this case racing, were a legitimate accessory to fairs because they stimulate the breeding of better stock. The horses and cattle depicted are all enormous prize specimens which dwarf their human companions. Other livestock are housed in tidy pens. The crowd at this fair includes only the fashionably dressed men,

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<sup>40</sup>*Fifth Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Year Ending November 30, 1876* (Topeka: , Geo. W. Martin Public Printer), 240.

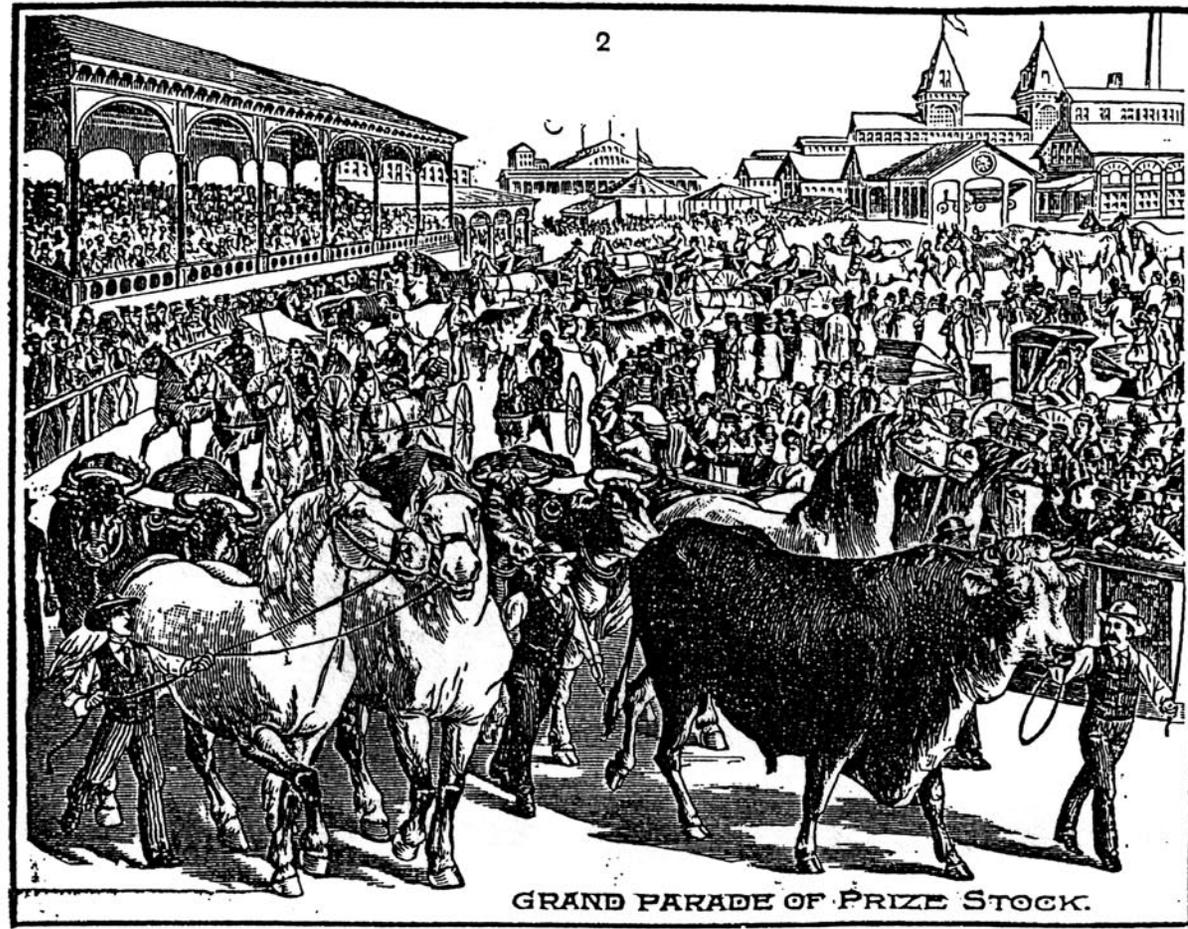


Figure 72. 1894 Franklin County Fair Poster, Stock Show.  
KSHS Premium Book Collection.

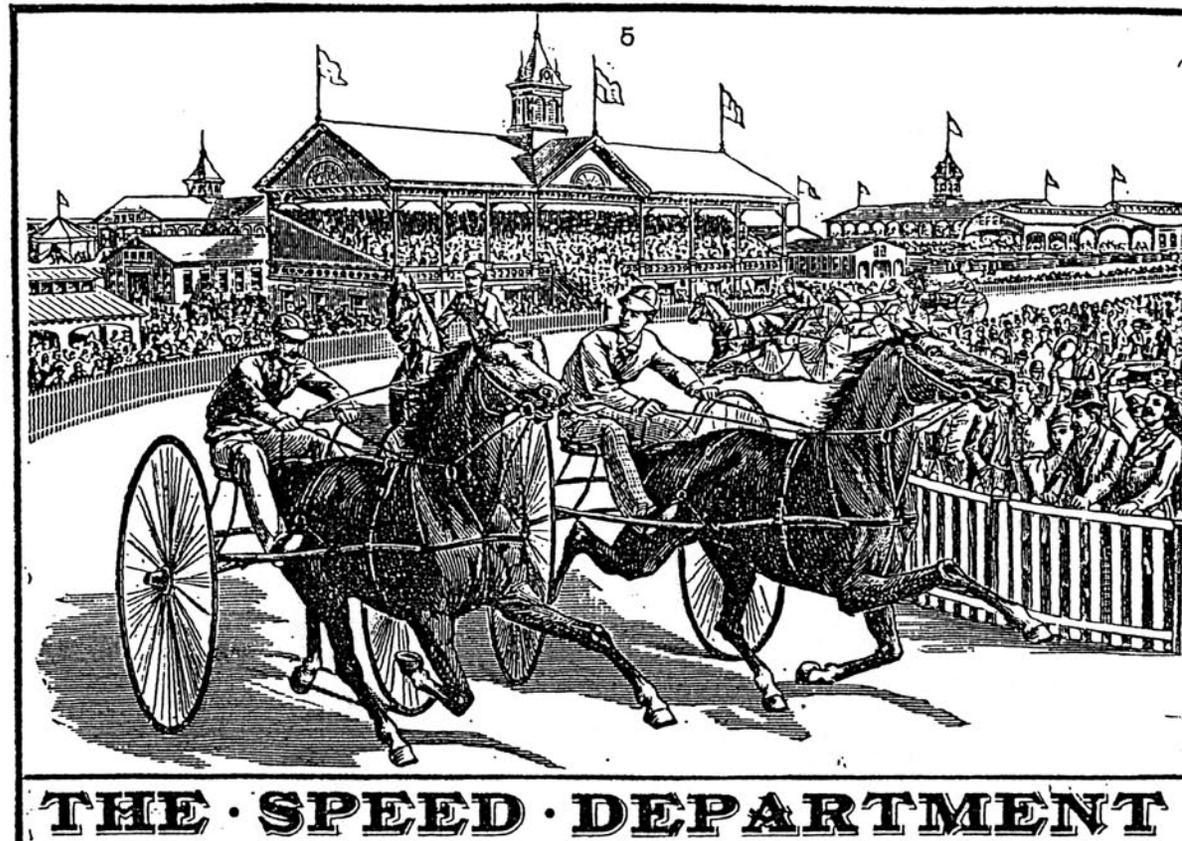


Figure 73. 1894 Franklin County Fair Poster, Speed Department.  
KSHS Premium Book Collection.

women and children. Fair sponsors would never have to worry about making a financial success here; it is a vision of perfection.

The grandstands are interesting because Robert Haywood has argued, much as James Allen did, that they were feminine space.<sup>41</sup> Allen's memoirs described how Kentucky women dressed in ball costumes went to the amphitheater so that men could admire them from a distance. Men spent their time together at track side with their race horses, or showing their prowess as horsemen in the ring. Haywood maintained in a similar argument that grandstands in Kansas cattle towns created orderly and decorous space so that women could attend events such as racing. The grandstand separated them from the "raucous and profane talking, and paying of bets." The idealized grandstands in Figures 72 and 73 suggest a similar division in men and women's space. Women are neither found at track side nor among the livestock.

Kansans created fairsapes close to these idealized sites. The August 8, 1880 *Daily Champion*, for example, described one in Atchison County. It was held at Woodland Park and had a race track which met requirements of the National Trotting Association. The Main Hall was 200' x 80', with a domed gallery, 94' in height. The building, on a hilltop, announced its importance and captured the crowd's attention. Horse stalls were built for 85 race horses and 50 premium cattle next to a "branch" although there were also wells on the grounds. The site provided overnight camping.

The September 7, *Atchison Daily Champion* bragged about "The Great Fair" then underway and recalled that fairs at the same site from 1869 to 1872 had been rained out almost every year. In 1879, the Atchison Industrial Exposition and Agricultural Fair Association incorporated, and created the new elaborate setting. The old site had a cross-shaped floral hall, which the new association made use of as a residence and offices for the association directors. Inside the track area, exhibitors used colorful, showy tents and booths to display their merchandise:

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<sup>41</sup> *Fairs and Fairmakers*, 127-9.

The stalls... are veritable horse palaces, enclosed on all sides with double doors in front and here the valuable animals live in real luxury. Some of the rooms, for such they are, are occupied by the men in charge and fitted up with looking glasses and all the comforts of a home. There are two lines of these stables and due west of the main building and the other extending on the line of the south fence. ... [T]he shade of the great elm and walnut trees, is the home of the pigs and chickens and sheep on exhibition. This sketch embraces most of the features of the ground, save perhaps the most curious of all, a small building on what we will call Exhibition Hill where chickens are hatched by steam. Such a combination of hill and dale, and stream, buildings, pens, enclosures; with flags flying everywhere, the red, white and blue mingling with vivid green of the woods, in Woodland Park.

The fair's exposition building copied the 1853 Crystal Palace and the Kansas and Colorado State Building in Philadelphia. It was a Greek cross with shortened transverse arms, 192' x 76'. The angles of the cross were filled with one-story annexes. The roof line was a monitor shape with towers at the ends of the cross arms. In the center of the building was an octagonal rotunda. It was richly decorated with flags and festoons of red, white and blue.

The paper carefully listed the products shown by commercial exhibitors and dealers renting space: clothing, stoves and ranges, drugs, tobacco, glass, and furniture, plus demonstrations by paper hangers and gas-fitters. The chief attraction of the exposition was an exhibit of "celebrated shorthorn and other blooded cattle of the country..."<sup>42</sup> There were only a few shorthorn breeders in Kansas in the 1870s so many of these cattle must have come to Atchison from other states.

A well-known eastern Kansas fair was the Western National Fair at Bismarck Grove in Lawrence. The Kansas Pacific owned a grove and

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<sup>42</sup>*Atchison Daily Champion*, September 10, 1880. County Fair Clippings, Vol. 1. Kansas State Historical Society Library. This newspaper article also covers activities such as Native American ball games and foot races. Native Americans were also to give an original war dance.

began to use it as exhibition and convention space in 1878. The railroad built fountains, walks, and drives, and added gas lights, and helped build the large tabernacle, which seated 5,000. Concessionaires set up booths for food, games and liquor.<sup>43</sup> As the grove became increasingly popular as a meeting site, the Kansas Pacific gave free use of the land to the Western National Fair Association in 1880 on the condition that its fair would permanently locate there. Figures 74 and 75 show some of Bismarck Grove's fairground.

The only building at the Grove before 1880 was the tabernacle, a large octagonal building 115' in diameter and 50' in height whose shape suited the fair well. The fair association then added an exhibition hall, a two-story cross with cupola. The building was 164' x 136', and the naves had towers at the ends. The association also built other buildings, so that the site became a fairscape, distinguished by its setting and architecture (see Figure 74).

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<sup>43</sup>Prior to 1900 similar grounds were at Ottawa's Forest Park, Topeka's Harzell Park, Winfield's Island Park, and Cawker City's Lincoln Park. Coffeyville and Wathena also had Chautauqua sites. Roland M. Mueller, *Tents and Tabernacles: The Chautauqua Movement in Kansas*, Ph. D. diss., University of Kansas, 1978, 167.



Figure 74. 1880 Bismarck Grove, Western National Fair.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

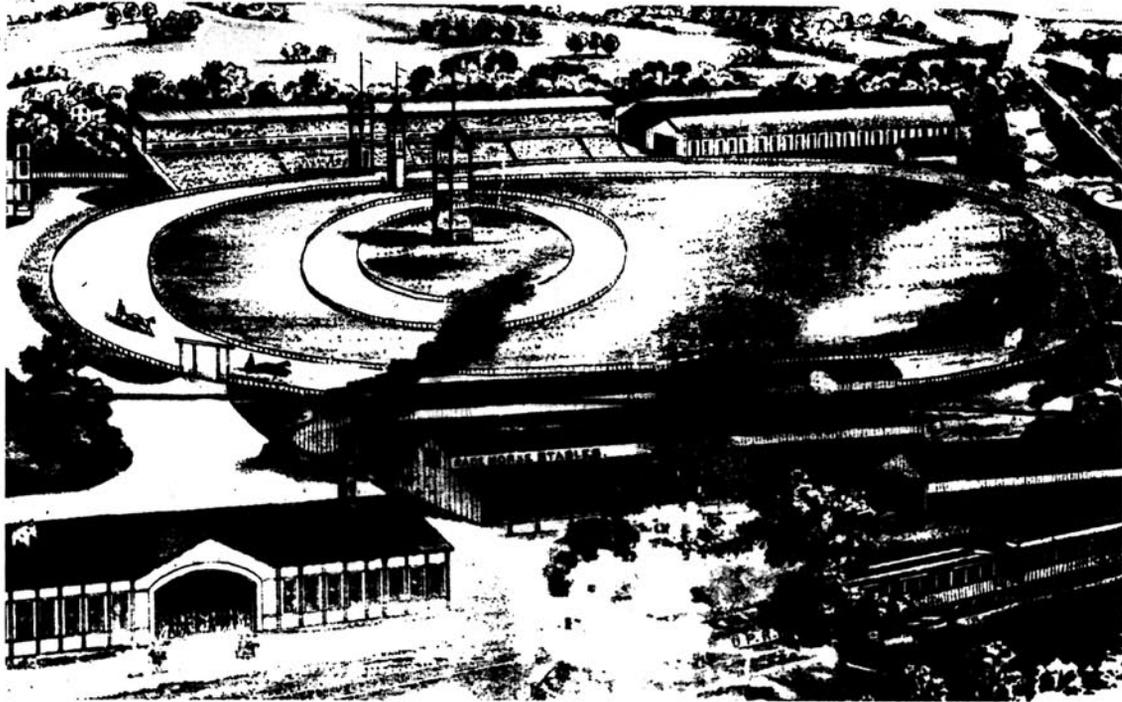


Figure 75. 1880 Bismarck Grove, Western National Fair Track.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

The grove included:

Oval race track	Dining halls (2)	Office for the press
Round show ring	Telegraph office	Art hall, 70' x 40', hip roof <sup>44</sup>
Square judges stand	Secretary's office	

Grandstand with seating for 5,000, about 1/3 covered seats.  
 Rectangular, gable roofed, or open shed-roofed cattle stalls and pens.  
 Monitor roofed racing stables with central aisle and 104 double stalls.  
 Carriage exhibition building (28' x 100'), gable roof.  
 Power hall for machinery and implements (180' x 50') modified cross.  
 County building (agricultural hall), one story, modified cross with cupola.  
 Stone waterworks (hydrants) for stables and stalls, fountains and lakes.

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<sup>44</sup>Of the buildings, the art hall least fits other prototypes. It may very well have been like other art halls, but they were not usually selected for fairground drawings. Poorly described, the sketch gives little sense of the building. It has a gable entry, however, an exterior skeleton and the roof appears hipped. It also looks as if a clerestory is built into the pitch. See Jim L. Lewis "Beautiful Bismarck Grove," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 35 (Autumn 1966): 225-56, for a history of the grove. A description of its buildings is on page 236.

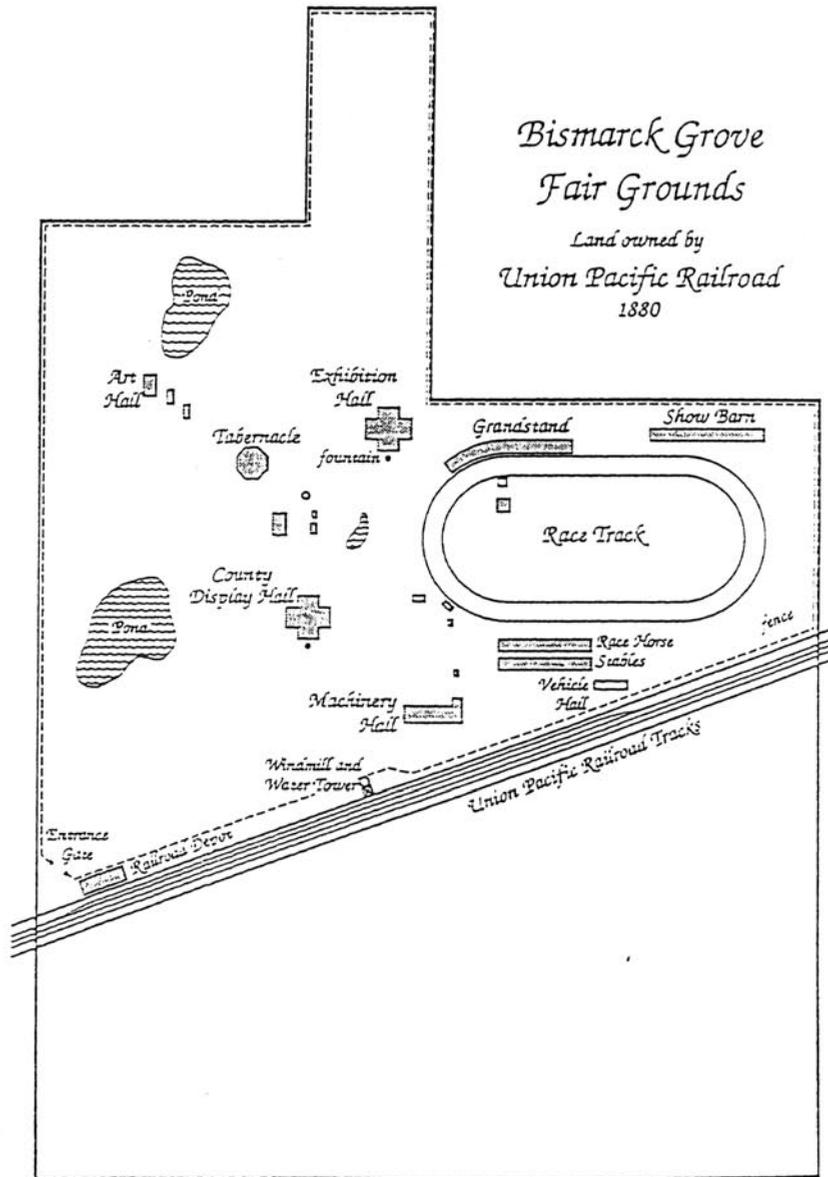


Figure 76. Site Plan for Bismarck Grove Fairgrounds.  
Watkins Museum Site File.

Several fair buildings show their framing on the outside. These are reminiscent of the cast iron skeleton of the New York Crystal Palace. While only one cross-shaped building exists today in Clay Center, its dome-like cupola is missing. It was built during the same period as the Bismarck fair, and its structural exterior skeleton is decoratively detailed with chamfers (Figure 77).<sup>45</sup> The other known extant Kansas fair building from the pre-1900 period is the 1875 octagon-shaped, stone floral hall in a Manhattan city park (Figure 78). It is similar to the Bismarck Grove tabernacle as well as other early Kansas fair buildings that borrowed the octagonal form from the Crystal Palace.

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<sup>45</sup>The tradition of revealing stick members was a popular trend at the time in housing and the stick style also was present in many of the Philadelphia exposition buildings. Housing and exposition buildings blended at the Philadelphia site as the different states created their own versions of exhibition buildings, and some of which were stick style. Examples from *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exposition* by McCabe show state "houses" of New Jersey, 785; Massachusetts, 789; Rhode Island, 801; New Hampshire, 807; Michigan, 674; and West Virginia, 817. Other stick buildings include the Southern Restaurant, 695; and the Judges' Hall, 692, which McCabe called the most attractive structure connected with the exhibition.

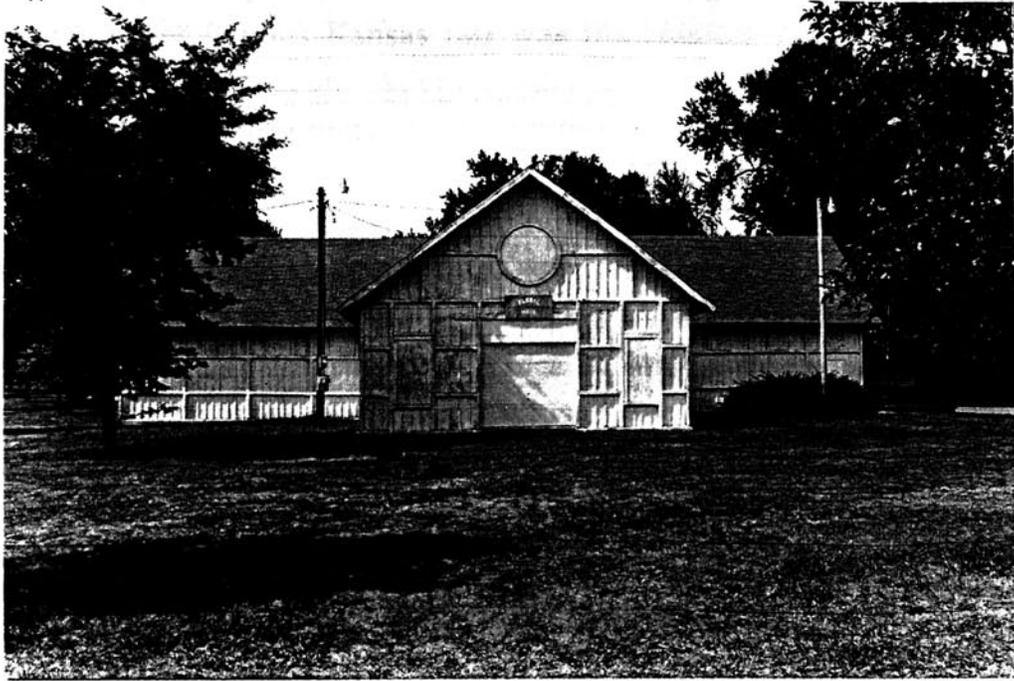


Figure 77. Clay Center, Clay County, c. 1883.  
Photo by author.

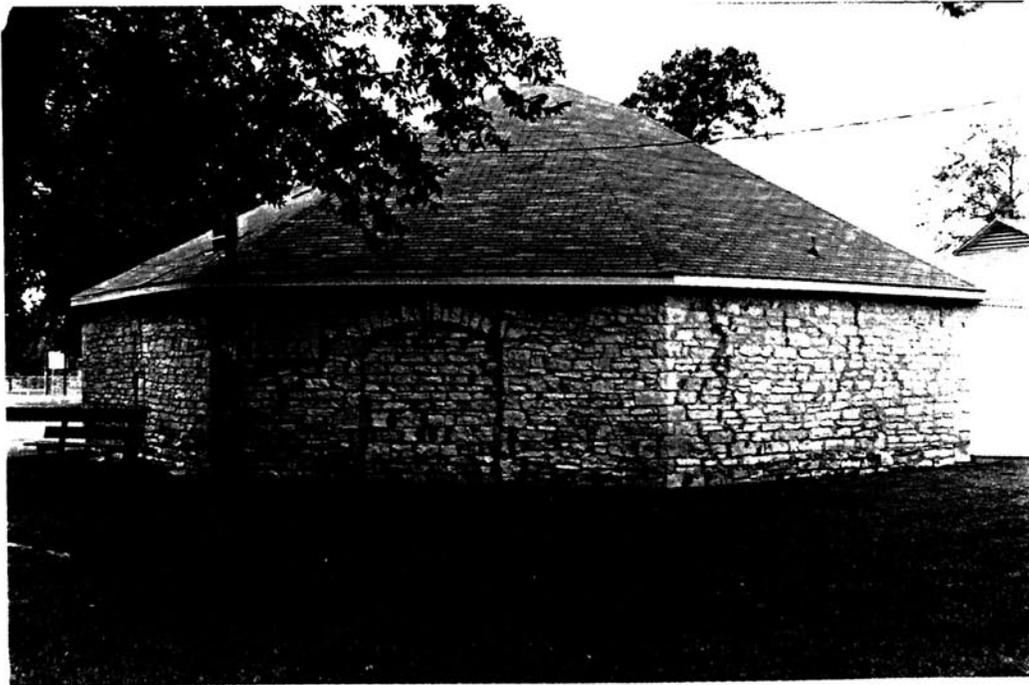


Figure 78. Manhattan City Park, 1875 Fair Building.  
Photo by author.

Another famous Kansas fair was the Neosho Valley District Fair, organized by Woodson, Allen, Anderson and Coffey Counties.<sup>46</sup> It claimed fame because President Rutherford B. Hayes once attended. The association formed and held its first fair in 1874. In 1879, the association invited President Hayes and then hired Henry Worrell to design an appropriate setting. Worrell built an arched entrance, topped by the Goddess of Liberty.<sup>47</sup> Figure 79 is Worrell's sketch of the event for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. Figure 81 shows Hayes speaking from inside the race track, facing the crowd that sat in a curved hillside amphitheater.

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<sup>46</sup>District fairs were not uncommon during the early days of Kansas fairs. County promoters could work together to share costs. Examples are the Northern Kansas District Fair in Atchison in 1870s; Northwestern Kansas District Agricultural and Mechanical Association in Beloit (Mitchell County, 1870s); Walnut Valley District Fair Association in Winfield (Cowley County, 1879); Valley Falls Kansas District Fair Assn. in Valley Falls (Jefferson County, 1879); the Seventh Judicial District Agricultural and Horticultural Society in Chanute (Neosho County, 1879); Jewell District Agricultural Society in Jewell City (Jewell County, 1881); Kaw Valley Fair Association in St. Marys (Pottawatomie County, 1880s); Upper Solomon Valley District Fair Association in Kirwin (Phillips County, 1870s); Arkansas Valley Fair Association in Wellington (Sumner County, 1870s); and the Sabetha District Fair Association in Sabetha (Nemaha County, 1880s). Some associations began in the twentieth century though, as did the Western District Fair Association in Wetmore (Nemaha County, 1920s).

<sup>47</sup>*The Commonwealth*, Oct. 1, 1879, Woodson County, County Fair Clippings, Vol. 3, Kansas State Historical Library.

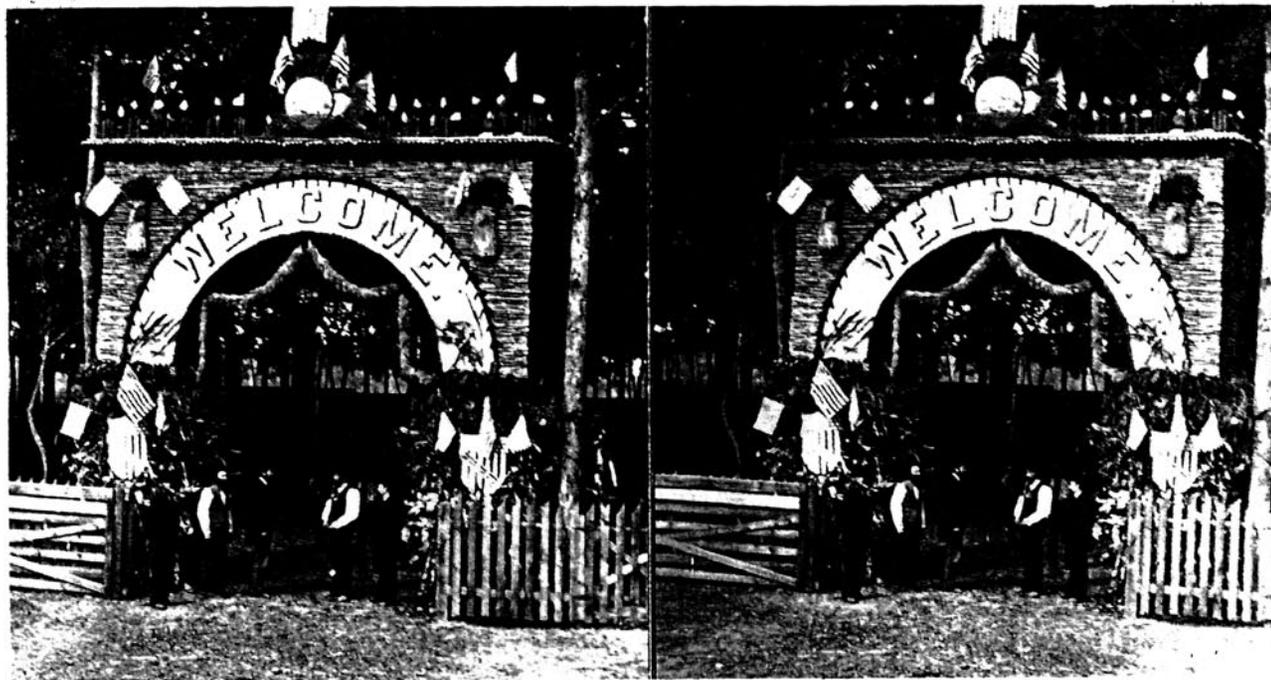
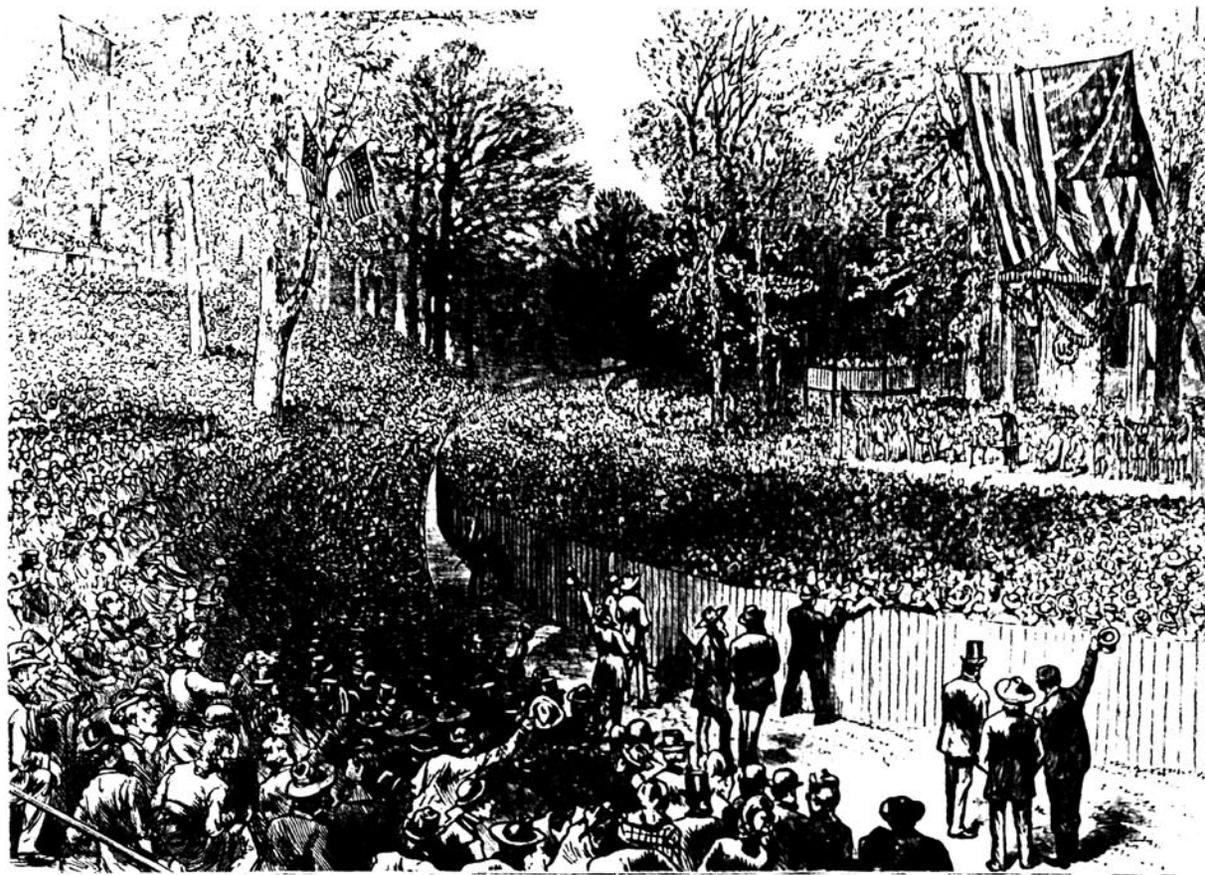


Figure 79. Neosho Valley District Fair, Entrance Gate,  
Neosho Falls, 1879. KSHS Photo Collection.



PRESIDENT HAYES RESPONDING TO THE ADDRESS OF WELCOME.

Figure 80. Neosho Valley District Fair, Neosho Falls, 1879,  
President Rutherford B. Hayes Addressing Audience.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

The Neosho Falls fairsite had all kinds of concessions: photograph galleries, barber shops, hot candy stands, wheels of fortunes, and forty-six other booths and three large dining halls.<sup>48</sup> The fairscape also had many standard features, including close proximity to a railroad depot. Railroads generally reduced fair rates so passengers and stock could travel more cheaply to the fair. Trains moved exhibitors and fair goers to and from the grounds. By helping fairs, railroads benefited because the more people who saw Kansas' communities and the state's natural and agricultural resources, the busier the railroad would be carrying "capitalists and intending settlers."<sup>49</sup>

Private railroads, town and county agricultural societies, and the KSBA worked together, each helping the other. In 1881 and 1882, the Board asked counties to report if they had a railroad near their fairgrounds. Out of 38 counties reporting, 33 reported tracks within one and one-half miles of their grounds.<sup>50</sup>

Railroad involvement was only one of many fair related items the KSBA wanted counties to report. Fairs were a cultural resource and the yearly reports documented their successes although they grew slowly in numbers. By 1872 Kansas had 71 counties with 21 fairs, and some counties had more than one. By 1880, 32 of 88 counties reported fairs; in 1900, 46 counties out of 105 attended the Kansas State Board of Agriculture meeting as credentialed members. Counties used the KSBA annual

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<sup>48</sup>"In the Beginning," *Journal of the Woodson County Historical Society* 4 (1969): 3-6. This story is also told in *To-Day, Beginning, Yesterday: A History of Neosho Falls, Kansas* by Opal McCullough Henderson and Terri Lynne Henderson, 80-83. No publisher, but donated to the Kansas State Historical Society Library in 1982.

<sup>49</sup>Robert C. Haywood, *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 136.

<sup>50</sup>*Third Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Years 1881-1882* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1883), 675-702.

meeting in Topeka to discuss their success and failures. For example, the Miami County Agricultural Society announced in 1872 that their in 1871 "was a complete success," but the group also observed that its "receipts were not so large as in former years...." The group had also made a substantial investment in 1872, buying forty acres at \$100 per acre, and building both a tight board fence to enclose the property and a Greek-cross floral hall (20' x 60'). The grounds had plenty of stalls and pens and "a good well of water on the premises," but they had to worry about their debt.<sup>51</sup> The annual reports make it clear that traditional-era fair associations struggled financially almost from the time they purchased a fairground. Although most of the fairs were not deeply in debt, the average amount changes from about 13 percent in 1886, to about 18 percent in 1888.<sup>52</sup>

The Atchison Industrial Exposition and Fair Association, so elaborately detailed by the newspapers in 1880, (described on pages 127-28) reported in 1881 that the corporation had made \$1,000 more improvements to the grounds, but, "Owing to bad weather, and the President's death (Garfield) during the week of the fair, we are behind this year, and unable to meet the demands against the association without an

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<sup>51</sup>*Transactions of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, with an Abstract of the Proceedings of the County Agricultural Societies and the Report of the State Horticultural Society, 1872* (Topeka: S. S. Prouty, Public Printer, 1872), 232.

<sup>52</sup>*Fifth Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Years 1885-1886, Part II* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, T. D. Thacher, State Printer, 1887), 213. See also, *Sixth Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Years 1887-1888* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, Clifford C. Baker, State Printer, 1889), 239-40.

assessment upon stockholders."<sup>53</sup> In 1882, the organization dissolved after only three years.

Fair corporations generally did not intend to pay dividends, but stockholders hoped that their corporations would remain solvent. Burdened with the cost of creating permanent fairgrounds and buildings, though, expenses frequently exceeded income. Stockholders, merchants and other members of the business sector underwrote their fairs for as long as they could, but debts still had to be paid. In Burden, the businessmen underwrote the fair, assuming any financial loss. Howard Collins recalls that when "it finally got to where it paid its way, it was not always easy to keep people interested in the fair. Sometimes a fair meeting would be called 2 or 3 times before we could get enough men together to get committees appointed to manage the fair."<sup>54</sup>

Scholars have noted that fairs served as a hub for merchandising.<sup>55</sup> Figure 81 shows both men and women standing around new farm machinery in Rice County, and Figures 82 and 83 show salesmen for windmill and cream separator companies at the Finney County Fair in 1895.

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<sup>53</sup>*Third Biennial Report of the St. Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Years 1881-82* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House 1883), 675.

<sup>54</sup>"Howard Collins Tells of First Burden Fairs," *Burden Times*, January 5, 1961. County Fair Clippings, Vol. 4, Kansas State Historical Society Library.

<sup>55</sup>See Schlereth, "County Stores, County Fairs and Mail Order Catalogues," 360-62; Gates, "Modernization as a Function of an Agricultural Fair," 264; and Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*, 227-28.

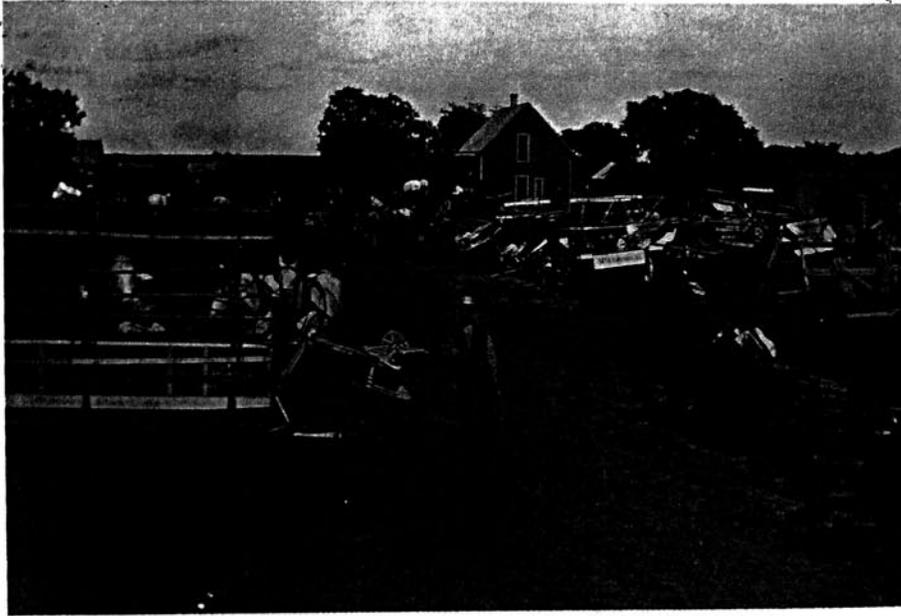


Figure 81. Rice County, Lyons, c. 1900. Courtesy of the Coronado Quivira Museum and Rice County Historical Society.



Figure 82. Finney County Fair, Garden City, 1895 Cream Separator Display. KSHS Photo Collection.



Figure 83. Finney County Fair, Garden City. 1894 Windmill Display. KSHS Photo Collection.

National manufacturers and local merchants liked fairs because they could demonstrate their products to large groups. Traditional period fairs were also sales opportunities for stock breeders. Professional breeders dominated livestock exhibits and their prized animals made it difficult for local farmers to compete.

Both stockmen and merchants helped agricultural associations financially by paying entry and booth fees, ground rent and admission. Perhaps the best income producer, however, was the horse racing that attracted a crowd who paid to enter the fairgrounds. Entrants paid large entry fees to compete for premiums in the "speed ring." In 1881, 35 counties out of 38 reported having races.<sup>56</sup> Financing a fair was just too difficult without it, although racing's associated gambling was always a point of conflict.

Agricultural associations were creative in their attempts to cover operating expenses. Many offered premiums on a *pro rata* basis; this allowed them to avoid paying the full advertised premium value if the gate take was insufficient to cover expenses. Some levied taxes. Linn County Agricultural and Mechanical Association (Mound City) in 1879 levied a charge of 25 percent on all cash premiums except for the sweepstakes, the "best of" awards, and the speed ring. They also stipulated that if the gate receipts were insufficient they would also prorate premiums accordingly. Their fee for each concession stand was \$10.00.<sup>57</sup> By 1893, the group collected money from a combination of gate receipts, stand rights, stall rents, and grandstand seats. Figure 84 shows entrance fees charged by the Dickinson County Fair in Abilene.

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<sup>56</sup>*Third Biennial Report of the St. Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State of Kansas for the Years 1881-82* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1883), 675-702.

<sup>57</sup>Linn County Premium Book, Premium Book Collection by County, Kansas State Historical Society Library.



Figure 84. Dickinson County, Abilene, Entrance Gate.  
Courtesy of the Dickinson County Historical Society.

McPherson County Agricultural and Mechanical Society used nearly the same collection system. In a 1878 premium book, the society noted their premiums were paid *pro rata*, and, in addition, the group collected a surcharge of 10 percent over their regular \$10.00 fee from anyone wanting more than one booth.<sup>58</sup>

Some associations tried to confront the appearance of financial instability by guaranteeing full payment of premiums while at the same time admonishing exhibitors to participate. The Harvey County Agricultural Association in 1887 bargained with fair goers: they would pay

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<sup>58</sup>McPherson 1878 Premium Book, Kansas State Historical Society Library Premium Book Collection by County.

premiums in full in return for attendance and exhibits. It is difficult to know how wide spread such practices were, but, based on available premium books, many associations used the method to hedge expenses against income.

Although useful marketing tools, county fairs were also important as social events. Fairs were just too limited in their ability in disseminate agricultural research and knowledge, and the premium system was incapable of having any real influence on the quality of livestock or crops.<sup>59</sup> The state of agricultural research was only just evolving. Until the Kansas State Agricultural College began a coordinated research program between 1874 and 1890, for example, farmers did not know which wheat strains were appropriate for Kansas.<sup>60</sup> The first genetic improvements of wheat took place only in 1906; further, up until 1920, the only other improvement in wheat was varietal.<sup>61</sup>

Although fair "showing" has been credited with changing animals' physical characteristics, the greatest factor in shaping the type and kind of cattle produced has been and remains the economics of the marketplace.<sup>62</sup> To help make fairs more effective there a popular clamor for trying a point system to help judge swine, but F. D. Coburn, Secretary of the State Board

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<sup>59</sup>J. K. Hudson, in the *Kansas Farmer* 12 (April 29, 1874): 129-130, commented on both the inability of farmers to compete with breeders and intrinsic problems in determining the value of agricultural products.

<sup>60</sup>Turkey Red was only mentioned in 1887 as being successfully grown in McPherson County. See Norman E. Saul, "Myth and History, Turkey Red Wheat and the Kansas Miracle," in *Kansas Revisited*, ed. Paul K. Stuewe (Lawrence: University of Kansas Continuing Education, 1990), 150. Also see *KSU AG Report*, Fall 1995, 8.

<sup>61</sup>E. G. Heyne, "The Development of Wheat in Kansas," in *The Rise of the Wheat State* eds. George E. Ham and Robin Higham (Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 1987), 45.

<sup>62</sup>Don L. Good, "The Beef Cattle Industry," in *The Rise of the Wheat State* eds. George E. Ham and Robin Higham (Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 1987), 77.

of Agriculture, summed up judging problems before the National Swine Breeders' Association:

... I do not stand in such awe of a "scale" or "score-card" for swine as many probably better judges do. The fact that the breeders of swine cannot agree among themselves as to a standard, and that the producers of a single breed have at least four different scales of points, differing in some instances as much as 100 per cent...shows me the utter hopelessness of any judge, be he expert or ignoramus, trying by his decisions to please any considerable majority in a collection of exhibitors....

Thus far in life I have somehow been unable to fully grasp the idea that perfection in a pig, a pudding or a woman, can be measured with a tape-line.<sup>63</sup>

When one considers pre-1900 fairs in the context agricultural research and farming patterns, it is easier to understand why the role of early fairs was limited primarily to a social one. Several writers express this.

The Farmer at the Fair -- Despite all that has been and justly may be said concerning the abuses attached to what Josh Billings calls "agricultural hoss trots," our fairs hold a large place in the affections of farmers. They give at least days of much needed recreation, whereof most farmers have far too few. All work and no play is as bad for men and women as it was for Jack in the old saw.<sup>64</sup>

Our county fairs are the farmers' holiday, the common people's jubilee, as it were; the day of joy and merriment; the day of renewing old acquaintances and making new ones; the day of aspirations, hopes, success and disappointments; the day of happy family reunions with the old folks; the day of gallantry and flirtation among the young, and day of toys and candy for the children; the day in which the people see the

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<sup>63</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 24 (January 6, 1886): 2. Speech in Chicago, November 11, 1885.

<sup>64</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 15 (September 19, 1877): 345.

blue ribbons tied on the products of their neighbors and observe the joyous countenances of those that have been successful, and with genuine county pride....<sup>65</sup>

George Meltzer, in the "Social Life and Entertainment on the Frontiers of Kansas," stressed the social value of fairs. Meltzer noted that early Kansas fairs were seldom more than large picnics. He concluded that nearly any kind of contest was popular from all types of racing to corn husking, fiddling, and horseshoe pitching. Many picnics were reunions or Old Settler and Old Soldier Days.<sup>66</sup> Fairs were places for courting, providing the younger set an opportunity for the necessary social contact for future marriage.<sup>67</sup>

Fair premium books from the traditional period list activities that support Meltzer's assessment. In the 1860s, they record plowing and spading matches, time tests of all kinds, baby shows, and target shooting.<sup>68</sup> In the 1870s, associations added baseball, balloon ascensions, lady equestrian races, military drills, sack and wheel-barrow races, glass-ball shooting contests, Indian dances and mock wars. In the 1890s, bicycle races

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<sup>65</sup>Aunt Polly from Hermit Hill, *Kansas Farmer* 21 (October 17, 1883): 6.

<sup>66</sup>George Meltzer, *Social Life and Entertainment on the Frontiers of Kansas*, 52-5. For resources, Meltzer used interviews, memoirs, newspapers and other publications. In the 1880s to 1890s, premium books record Old Settlers' or Old Soldiers' Days in Crawford County in 1884, Dickinson County in 1878, Finney County in 1897, Linn County in 1886, and Osage County in 1884. Premium Book Collection by County, Kansas State Historical Society Library.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>68</sup>Everett Dick, *The Sod House Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1937), 280-5. A gun club sponsored one Kansas fair from the 1880s to 1892. *Burden Times*, January 5, 1961, County Fair Clippings, Vol. 4, Kansas State Historical Society Library.

and parachute jumps appear.<sup>69</sup> Also in the 1890s, premium books begin to chronicle activities at concessions and booths. These included shooting galleries, swings, cane and knife racks, food, cigars, tobacco, candy, photographs, hot candies, popcorn, lemonade, icecream, cider, watermelon, and peanuts.

Nearly every fair had horse racing. Meltzer's study helps highlight its less institutionalized side in everyday life.

Horse racing in the southwest [part of Kansas] was practiced in an impromptu manner. There were no periods of training nor established tracks. A post for a line up and a smooth stretch of prairie for a mile, half-mile, or quarter...was all that was needed. Quarter horses were small, fourteen to fifteen hands in height, well-boned and heavily muscled. With the growth of the state and county fairs in the Middle West, quarter horse racing steadily yielded to longer distance racing. Races of a half-mile, three-quarters, or a mile were popular.<sup>70</sup>

Everett Dick describes racing in Wichita in 1872 every Saturday afternoon.<sup>71</sup> Robert Haywood found in his study of cattle towns that there was a strong interest in harness racing and claimed that this brought the ladies to the track.<sup>72</sup> Kansas had famous trotters in organized racing. One, "Little Pete" from Linn County, won a gold medal at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition races in 1876.<sup>73</sup> Race scenes similar to the 1911 Pratt

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<sup>69</sup>Marshall and Miami county premium books indicate both fairs had baseball games in 1879. Premium Book Collection by County, Kansas State Historical Society Library.

<sup>70</sup>Meltzer, *Social Life and Entertainment on the Frontiers of Kansas*, 98.

<sup>71</sup>Dick, *The Sod House Frontier*, 277-79.

<sup>72</sup>Haywood, *Victorian West*, 225.

<sup>73</sup>In the 1870 census, Linn, a southeastern county was the state's largest tobacco producer. *Kansas Farmer* 7 (November 1870): 177. Linn County had a Southern cultural hearth which helps to explain its tobacco cultivation and horse racing. See James R. Shortridge, "People of the New

County fair in Figure 85 are repeated over and over in fair photos before and after 1900.

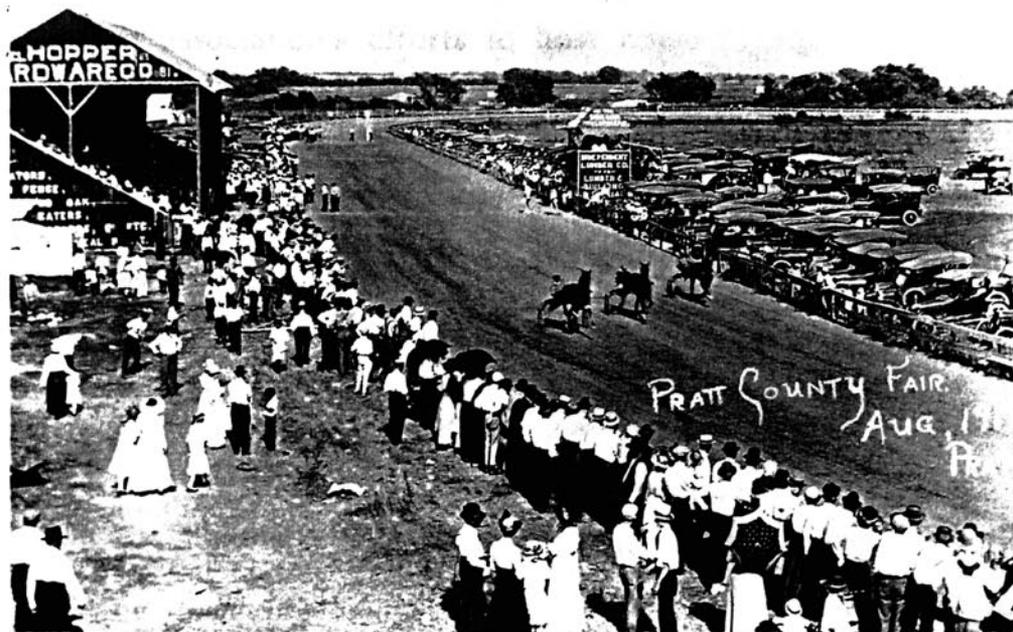


Figure 85. Pratt County, Pratt, 1916.  
Courtesy of the Pratt County Historical Society.

The presence of racing eventually became a pivotal point for debate over the purpose of fairs. Factions squared off over racing as they struggled to change the fairs' mission from commercial boosterism for the merchant to agricultural education for the farmer. Attitudes toward racing seemed to depend on who was doing it, and in what manner. As long as it was somewhat impromptu with local people and nags, it was not opposed (though betting was certainly a part of any race). Opposition was aimed more at flat racing than trotting and so men interested in the latter

formed trotting associations for both racing and fairs.<sup>74</sup> In Barber County, for example, a Kiowa group formed the Barber County Agricultural, Driving Park and Fair Association in 1887.<sup>75</sup> There were at least a dozen of these fair and racing groups going at one time or another up to about 1917.

Newspapers in the 1870s and 1880s generally supported their local agricultural association's efforts to host horse racing. The *LyCygne Journal*, October 4, 1879, bragged that its fair grounds, half-mile track and was "among the finest in the state."<sup>76</sup> But every newspaper described their county's track as the finest and were unhappy if there not enough entries for a good race.

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Frontier: Kansas Population Origins, 1865," *Kansas History* 14 (Autumn 1991): 172.

<sup>74</sup>Zoe A. Tilghman, "Quarter Horses and Racing in the Southwest," *Kansas Historical Society Collections*, (Topeka: 1926-28,17: 351. Also see Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation and Manhood in the Rural South 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 192. Ownby noted that as long as popular recreation retained its local character, even Southern evangelicals tolerated it.

<sup>75</sup>There were many other similar associations in Kansas, at Uniontown, Bourbon County - a Fair/Driving Association in 1902; in Clyde in Cloud County - a Agricultural and Driving Park Association from 1880 to 1882; in Winfield, Cowley County - the Cowley County Fair and Driving Park Association; in Howard, Elk County - the Howard Fair and Driving Society; in Newton, Harvey County - a Driving and Athletic Association in 1878; in Parsons, Labette County - a Fair and Driving Park Association from about 1882 to 1886; in Emporia, Lyon County - the Emporia Fair and Driving Association; in Chanute, Neosho County - the Ag. Fair, Park and Driving Association from about 1896 to 1910; in Topeka, Shawnee County - the Topeka Driving Park Association in 1878; in Goodland, Sherman County - an Agriculture and Racing Association from about 1912 to 1917; and in Caldwell, Sumner County - the Caldwell Driving Park and Agricultural Association in 1885.

<sup>76</sup>Linn County. County Fair Clippings, Vol. 1, Kansas State Historical Society Library.

It took entertainment and racing to attract crowds, although it did not please those who felt fairs should keep a narrow agricultural focus. Figure 86 from an 1863 *American Agriculturist* shows their concern.<sup>77</sup>



Figure 86. The Modern Agricultural Fair.  
*American Agriculturist* 22 (November 1863): 329.

One agricultural society tried to distance itself from the racing by asking a racing association to handle that part of their fair for 20 percent of the gate take.<sup>78</sup> Eventually the organizers of harness racing integrated fairs

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<sup>77</sup>*American Agriculturist* 22 (November 1863): 329.

<sup>78</sup>*Clifton Review* (May 5, 1881). County Fair Clippings, Vol. 1, Kansas State Historical Society Library. This newspaper is in Washington County. Using a racing association probably reduced the agricultural society's financial risks as well.

into racing circuits, and at least ten different circuits were in Kansas during the period of racing's popularity.<sup>79</sup> Figure 87 shows the Middle and Western Circuit for 1887.

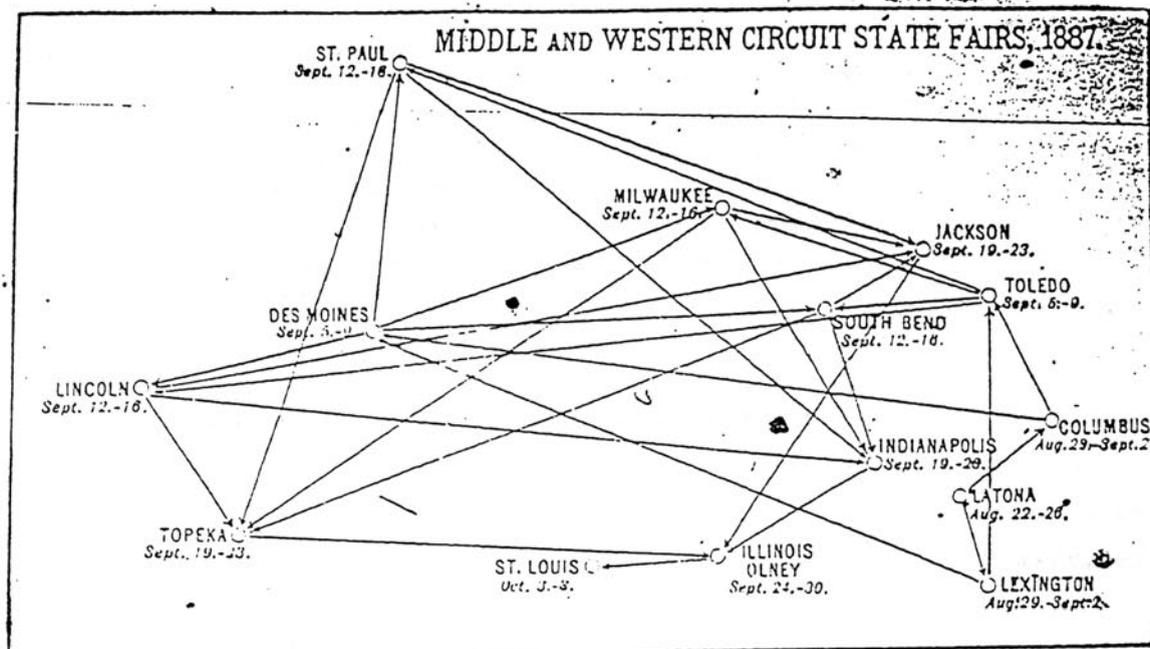


Figure 87. Middle and Western Circuit State Fair, 1887.  
*Kansas Farmer* 25 (July 21, 1887): 5.

The Grand Circuit for state fairs started in Detroit and moved through Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Louisville, Nashville, Chattanooga, and Memphis. Many Linn County men, among others, followed this route

<sup>79</sup>These following list came from premium books and may not include all the circuits: North West Kansas Circuit, America Trotting Association Circuit, Southern Circuit, Kansas Pacific Circuit, Golden Belt Circuit, Diamond Fair Circuit, Wheat Belt Racing Circuit, Interstate Fair Circuit, Oklahoma and Kansas Circuit, Arkansas Valley Circuit, and the Oil Belt Circuit.

year after year with their trotters.<sup>80</sup> A few circuits handled more than just racing. The Kansas-Oil Belt circuit also included stock breeders and amusement companies. This packaging helped Kansas counties minimize scheduling difficulties. Elliott Irvin, one of the organizers of the circuit and secretary to the 1925 Montgomery County Fair in Coffeyville remarked:

This circuit encourages and invites the horseman, the exhibitor of premium stock and manufacturer to meet with us, suggest improvements, consider complaints and adjust differences when possible. Each one is allowed to present his feature, his attraction in its best possible light. He is allowed to name a price for ten or twelve weeks engagement, uninterrupted and every week for the two and a half or three months of the circuit's program.<sup>81</sup>

Benefits included a circuit's ability to minimize the amount of time in railroad transit from one fair to another. Irvin called this "short ship," and for both amusement companies and stock breeders it reduced costs and wear and tear on the equipment and animals while it maximized their fair attendance schedule.<sup>82</sup>

Many of the men on the racing circuits came to Kansas from other states and were considered outsiders. Before 1900, horse traders roamed the state with caravans. These traders also entered horses at fairs that generally could outrun any local nag; this caused locals to equate them with hoodwinkers and swindlers.<sup>83</sup> R. W. Furness in an address to the

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<sup>80</sup>William Ansel Mitchell, *Linn County, Kansas: A History* (LaCygne: LaCygne Journal, 1928), 267.

<sup>81</sup>Elliott Irvin, "The County Fair Circuit," *Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture for the Quarter Ending March, 1925* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, B. P. Walker, State Printer, 1925), 24.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Dr. M. C. Rankin interview.

State Board of Agriculture in 1897, stated that he liked to see a horse go, but only to do his best in a trot or run. If manipulated by a modern jockey (the outsider), racing was no good.<sup>84</sup>

When critics condemned racing, racing groups were quick to point out the old difference between the jockey and the trotter.

In running races the main factors have always been, in this country at least, love of horses, the excitement of the strenuous contests, and gambling -- these three, and the greatest of these is gambling. Hence, it has been rare that any real friend of morality of Christian civilization has patronized or even countenanced the running turf. The ill favor of the term "horse-race," which has always associated it with "gambler," "blackleg," etc., etc., was born on the running turf.

But a movement arose in this country seeking to develop and maintain a type of horse more sensible, and useful than the runner, the fleet, strong, docile, level-headed and widely adaptable trotter. This movement did not look to gambling as a factor, but sought to avoid it. Systematic efforts toward founding a light-harness breed or race of horses were projected and carried forward, chiefly by men opposed to gambling, and of a degree of moral dignity for which gamblers have a pronounced aversion.

The factors which promoted the trotting turf were love of horses, the production of safe, speedy and useful animals for carriage driving in every practicable way, and to supply the demand for fast steppers among business men of status whose health and limited leisure required exhilarating but brief recreation. There was in this movement both philosophy and practical common sense, but not the least need of the gambling stimulus.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>R. W. Furnas, "Fairs and Expositions: Their Uses and Management as Educators," *Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture for the Quarter Ending March 31, 1897* (Topeka: State of Kansas, 1897), 231.

<sup>85</sup>"A Hurt to Trotting Interests," *Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture for the Quarter Ending December 1899* (Topeka: State of Kansas, 1899), 95.

Flat racing was bad because of its history of long association with gambling; harness racing was good because the right sort of people, businessmen of status, had deemed it so; friendly gambling was only "naughty but nice."

The "Hurt to Trotting Interests," was gambling. The author argued that fairgoers could reduce its influence and redeem trotting as a respectable sport (although gambling would remain as a parasite). Regardless of the arguments against racing, for many Kansans who had long enjoyed racing, fairs indulged their interests.<sup>86</sup>

Agricultural societies often resolved the conflict (at least among themselves) by arguing that negative side effects were balanced by popularizing and improving the horse. While all attempts should be made to erase dishonesty and gambling, horse racing was essential to please fair audiences.<sup>87</sup> They made the same argument for sideshows, montemen and fakirs.

Much of the tension over racing is recorded in the *Kansas Farmer*. Writers often took the merchants' side, blaming the farmer for not attending fairs in sufficient numbers to help defray expenses. If farmers did not attend, then agricultural associations needed racing to attract attendance. "But unless the farmers themselves take hold and keep the thing steady," the *Kansas Farmer* declared in 1885, "it will either fail in time or run into a driving park or something that the sensible farmer cares nothing about."<sup>88</sup> Other writers agreed, fearing that agriculture would be "scarcely noticeable."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>J. E. Woodford, "Are Agricultural Fairs Worthy of State or County Aid?" *Quarterly Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture for the Month Ending March 31, 1891* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, Clifford C. Baker, State Printer, 1891), 31-4.

<sup>88</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 23 (December 30, 1885): 98.

<sup>89</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 17 (February 12, 1879): 56.

At meetings of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture in the late 1880s and early 1890s members attending the annual January meetings repeatedly discussed the pros and cons of both racing and entertainment. These were heated discussions with strong feelings both for and against, so the KSBA took no one position.

Racing, entertainment, side-shows and contests made Kansas fairs before 1900 entertaining and social community celebrations. Although farmers tolerated and enjoyed non-agricultural activities (especially racing) they began to reject them during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Common farmers began to align themselves more strongly with the image of the yeoman. They affirmed agricultural virtues of prudence, integrity, moderation.<sup>90</sup> It was hard to justify the fun of horse racing and gambling, drinking, and game playing with a disciplined life. Distinctions between virtue and vice became more well-defined and therefore juxtaposed, so Kansans could not sit as easily in the middle. Many had trouble resolving the contradiction in the established format of fairs with a more righteous perspective of themselves as upright farmers.<sup>91</sup>

Kansas fair laws mediated some of the tension over fair activities. For example, by 1874 Kansas enacted a law that prohibited agricultural societies from spending money on racing, but agricultural societies held races anyway because money for the purse came from voluntary contributions. Other 1874 laws prohibited gambling and drinking, but

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<sup>90</sup>Jean V. Matthews, *Toward a New Society: American Thought and Culture 1800-1830* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 5. Matthews talks about virtue in a larger sense than I have used, but her description of this state assigns perfectly the kind of values given to husbandry or farming.

<sup>91</sup>Scholars such as James Shortridge have made this point before, as in Shortridge's, *The Middle West: Its Meaning In American Culture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 28. He has argued that the power of this pastoral imagery can be measured by how rapidly it came to dominate definitions of the Middle West after 1900. It was not only assigned by outsiders, but, as evidenced in the evolution of Kansas fairs, it was also accepted by Kansans.

enforcement was slight.<sup>92</sup> Dr. M. C. Rankin, a member of the Kansas Racing Commission in 1994, recalled that these laws were ignored until the 1950s.<sup>93</sup> Despite the law, alcoholic beverages flowed freely, as at the fair in Figure 88.

Early statutes allowed counties to help fairs financially. For example, by 1868 county commissioners could levy a one-quarter mill tax for a county agriculture society to purchase, enclose and improve grounds for fairs. By 1870, the state legislature had raised the amount to one and three-quarter mills, but after 1874 it required electoral approval.<sup>94</sup> In 1872, the legislature allowed agricultural societies to draw up to \$200 a year for the payment of premiums from the county, depending upon the amount in the association's treasury. In a KSBA report several associations reported having received county money.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Dr. M. C. Rankin interview.

<sup>94</sup>*First Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of The State of Kansas for the years 1877-78* (Topeka: State Board of Agriculture, 1878), 562.

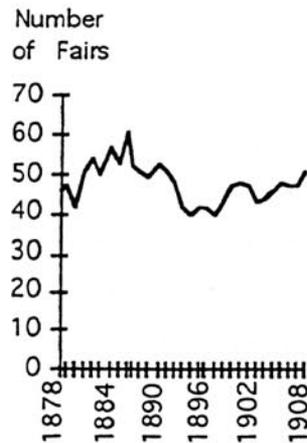
<sup>95</sup>Ibid.



Figure 88. Shawnee County, Topeka, Anheiser Busch Booth under Grandstand, 1895. KSHS Photo Collection.

Despite these attempts to aid fairs, hard times affected fairs and they declined from around the end of the 1880s to about the end of the century (See Chart 1).

Chart 1. Number of Kansas Fairs per Year, 1878 to 1908.



County histories, premium books, surveys, KSHS county fair newspaper clippings, *Kansas Farmer* and other newspapers, and agricultural periodicals.

The fairs that survived during these years were those with a relatively stable history of community support and involvement, and were usually organized by groups whose fairs provided a little something for everyone.<sup>96</sup>

Many who have studied fairs explain their dwindling number just prior to 1900 by arguing that racing and sideshows eventually drove agricultural interests away. But the contention over racing and sideshows was only symptomatic of farming's many problems. The look of Kansas fairs and the membership of agricultural societies underscored that agricultural interests were never as involved as merchants and businessmen. More importantly, these farmers and businessmen, operated within the deflationary economy of the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>96</sup>These include Allen, Coffey, Cowley, Franklin, and Linn counties. Many other counties managed to continue on into the 1910s before ending their fairs. The strength of many of today's fairs rests on the degree of community involvement. Those with histories of community ownership of their fairs seem to be the strongest.

Drought and falling prices, which began a quarter-century-long slide with the depression in 1873, squeezed farmers so they could hardly pay their debts.<sup>97</sup> Investment capital evaporated in the 1880s and the 1890s, and this changed the speculative attitude of towns, railroads and commercial enterprises.

The only region in Kansas where there was no significant decline in the number of fairs in the 1890s was the northeast, the area with the most established counties and urban population. Some central Kansas counties had three mortgages for every four farms, and western Kansas counties lost half of their population.<sup>98</sup> Kansas led the country as the most mortgaged state and during these difficult times, many farmers found they could not make their loan payments.

Troubles in the 1890s helped feed the fires of populism, a movement that was indirectly significant for fairs. Populism was indicative of a state of mind among Kansas farmers about the agrarian myth. They embraced the myth for it served their purposes. The populist message conveyed that farmers could alter their social and economic conditions, reestablish control over their lives, and overcome conditions they believed threatened their existence.

In an attempt to assert the claims of ordinary citizens to govern their own affairs, populists campaigned against those elements they saw responsible for wresting away their independence: railroad shipping rates, high taxes and high interest rates, the inordinate profits of middlemen, and even their community merchants.<sup>99</sup> The uneasiness between populists and town merchants spread into the struggle over the purpose of fairs. Separate rural and urban social networks and social institutions did

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<sup>97</sup>Jeffrey Ostler, *Prairie Populism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 6.

<sup>98</sup>Joseph V. Hickey, *Ghost Settlement on the Prairie*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 171.

<sup>99</sup>Hickey, *Ghost Settlement*, 171.

not help. Populism was deeply rooted in rural schools, churches and voluntary associations, and merchants had their own schools, churches and voluntary associations in towns.

Although farmers and merchants were mutually dependent on one another, changes in the national marketing of products and a move from trade and barter into a cash economy made merchants middlemen who farmers believed were taking advantage of them. Farmers saw themselves responsible for the livelihood of town merchants, and in turn, merchants and bankers believed that the farmer needed them to survive.

There were also perceived differences in lifestyles. Farmers tended to believe that the town dweller supported gambling and drinking, and tolerated "loose" morals; farmers and their families, by merchants standards, never had fun. Town and rural interests differed over allocation of public funds, control of county government, the community's image and natural resource utilization.<sup>100</sup> These conflicts indicated more than just a tension between perspectives, for the cause lay deep within the changes affecting farming. Farmers were having to produce more between 1875 and 1900 to survive; they were adjusting to a technological revolution; and perhaps most important, farming was ending as a subsistence economy. Though the farmer now strongly believed he was the "bone and sinew of the Republic," nationally farming

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<sup>100</sup>This tension was noticeable into the twentieth century. A speaker talking to the Commercial Club in Reno county in 1913 noted that "country farmers" held contempt for "town farmers," who tended to be more successful. The speaker noted the reason was because country farmers remained off to themselves and did not rub elbows with town farmers in the cities who used their brains in their work. Percy, "Blowing the Whistle," 28-9. While it is difficult to interpret exactly what the speaker meant by town and county farmers, clearly one group lived on the land and one lived away from it, and one group was perceived to be wealthier than the other. The speaker implies that town farmers owned land but others farmed it.

was under assault as backward, out of touch, and unsophisticated.<sup>101</sup> O. Gene Clanton, who has studied Kansas populism, has argued that the nation saw the brave new world of the future as industrial, not agricultural.<sup>102</sup>

To prove that they retained a special status, farmers entrenched themselves in a belief that they led virtuous lives and found themselves supporting prohibitions of all kinds to improve their society. In contrast to the moralizers of the 1830s, when mostly politicians and the press tried to instill a spirit of perfectionism, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it was the farmers who moved to instill this spirit within themselves and their communities. Organizations like the Kansas Grange, formed in 1872, had a special zeal for opposing intoxicants, for example, believing prohibition would improve moral character. Intemperance to many grangers was the fountain that produced the evils that influenced society and corrupted peace and prosperity.<sup>103</sup>

The desire to perfect moral character can be seen in the reaction to women's riding events. From as early as 1870 to as late as 1909, Kansas county premium books list ladies' riding contests.<sup>104</sup> Women riding at fairs had drawn spectators for some time and the *Kansas Farmer* had mostly ignored it. But in 1881 an editorial admonished that fairs really

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<sup>101</sup>Thomas D. Van Sant, *Improving Rural Lives: A History of Farm Bureau in Kansas, 1912-1992* (Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 1993), 10.

<sup>102</sup>O. Gene Clanton, "Kansas Populism," *Kansas Revisited*, ed. Paul K. Stuewe (Lawrence: University of Kansas Continuing Education, 1990), 217.

<sup>103</sup>D. Sven Nordin, *Rich Harvest: A History of the Grange, 1867-1900* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1974), 190. Not all members of the Grange took such extreme stand with regard to alcohol, but in Kansas by 1880, prohibition was the law.

<sup>104</sup>Ladies' equestrian contests were held in at least Douglas, Miami, Coffey, Dickinson, Elk, Graham, Montgomery, Osage, Reno, Rooks, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Smith counties.

were not the place for horse racing or women riding. The writer noted that he did not want to "either limit or infringe on the rights of women," but if racing could not improve men, then it would not improve women either.<sup>105</sup>

When Farmer's Alliance members formed a populist party in Topeka in 1890, among its supporters was the *Kansas Farmer*. Its editor was dedicated to alliance principles of "Agitate, Educate, Organize." This affiliation influenced a decline in the paper's coverage of fairs since they continued to sponsor activities believed responsible for tarnishing the moral character of fairgoers. The *Kansas Farmer* assumed a disinterested air with regard to fair reporting; they existed, but were of scarce importance.<sup>106</sup> If nothing else, this position was politically expedient because it kept the newspaper out of trouble with both fair supporters and detractors.

An exception to a fading enthusiasm for fairs was the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. This fair was extraordinarily well received in the United States. Many Americans attended the fair, and thousands of other people worked at the local level to collect display items. This broad involvement created an intense interest in the fair and facilitated a popular identification with it.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 19 (October 16, 1881): 430.

<sup>106</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 29 (September 16, 1891): 11.

<sup>107</sup>Robert Rydell, in "The Culture of Imperial Abundance: World's Fairs in the Making of American Culture," in (*Consuming Visions*, ed. Simon Bronner (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), 204-08) has argued from a case study of Montana that work for the exposition gave local political elites cultural authority to provide a blueprint for economic and cultural development. Montana received valuable advertising, as did Kansas from their exhibits.

Kansas also participated in the 1898 Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha. The effort put into this exhibition by the state is unclear. The Governor, George W. Glick, was on the commission in charge of the exhibit. The architect of the building, John F.

To prepare for the fair, the KSBA formed a special Board of Promotion in 1891. This fair received wide attention in Kansas despite the difficult times. The Board of Promotion hired architect Seymour Davis, from Topeka, to erect the Kansas building, one of the states' largest (Figure 89).<sup>108</sup> The *Book of the Fair* describes the Kansas building as cruciform in shape, unique and substantial.<sup>109</sup> Eclectic in design, the building's entrance had a Romanesque arch (similar to those used by H. H. Richardson or Louis Sullivan) with a large tower. The window and door hoods look gothic, yet the small windows in the upper area of the first story are much more modern and similar to windows found later on many of Frank Lloyd Wright's homes -- high, small and in horizontal ribbons. The roof overhangs are similar to the Greene brothers' later design for the Gamble House, or those on Wright's Willits House. This fair's architecture was mainly neoclassical, so Seymour Davis' work must have looked incongruous.

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Stanton from Topeka, designed a rather simple building, almost square 55' x 57', with a two story interior square of 32' x 32'. Instead of putting all exhibits together in the state building, Kansas scattered them in the various main buildings. There was also an exposition in 1901 in Buffalo, New York, although again, the extent of Kansas's participation is unclear.

<sup>108</sup>Daniel H. Burnham, *The Final Official Report of the Director of Works of the World's Columbian Exposition* Vol. 1, 1893 (repr. New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 58, 94.

Seymour Davis was State Architect from 1893 to 1895 while he was still in his early twenties. Little is known about him according a state register nomination for the John Frost home in Topeka, where Davis is listed as architect. Davis, from Philadelphia, moved to Kansas when he was a young man. He was apparently was known for his flair in unique designs, often blending popular styles of the time and adding his own innovations. The Kansas building design was chosen in a contest. Davis returned to Philadelphia in either 1895 or 1896 and opened a private practice.

<sup>109</sup>Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: Bancroft Publisher, Inc. 1895), 817. The building had a rough footprint of about 140' x 140' with about 15,000 square feet inside.

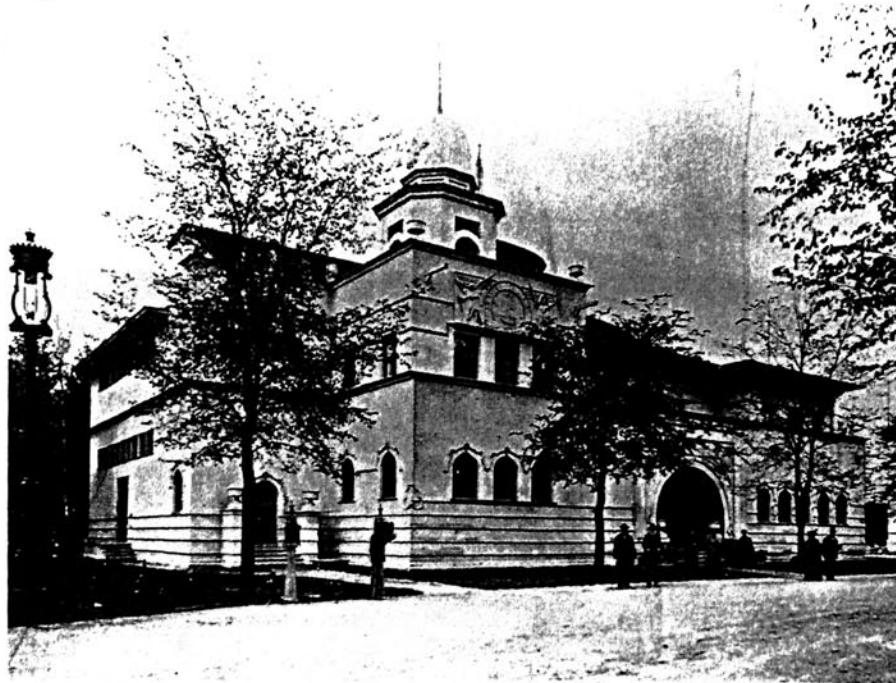


Figure 89. Kansas Building 1893 Columbian Exposition.  
Hubert Howe Bancroft. *The Book of the Fair*. Vol. 3  
(Chicago: The Bancroft Company Publishers, 1895), 819.

Because of its broad appeal, the Columbian Exposition had the potential to provide new visual models for fair buildings, much as the New York Crystal Palace had in 1853. But in Kansas, there seem to be no strong new patterns derived from this fair, rather only modifications on traditional themes. The livestock area and stock pavilion provide an example.

Holabird and Roche designed the Chicago exposition's livestock pavilion, which was similar to today's open air sports stadium. The structure was oval, enclosed, with a large tan bark field under which was a wooden cedar block pavement. This space was intended for livestock shows but Daniel Burnham (director of the Columbian Exposition) noted that the pavilion was used very little for that purpose; it served for instead

military tournaments and large open-air meetings.<sup>110</sup> Figure 90 shows that each quarter of the amphitheater seating was much like a grandstand. These curved grandstands are similar to many still in Kansas.

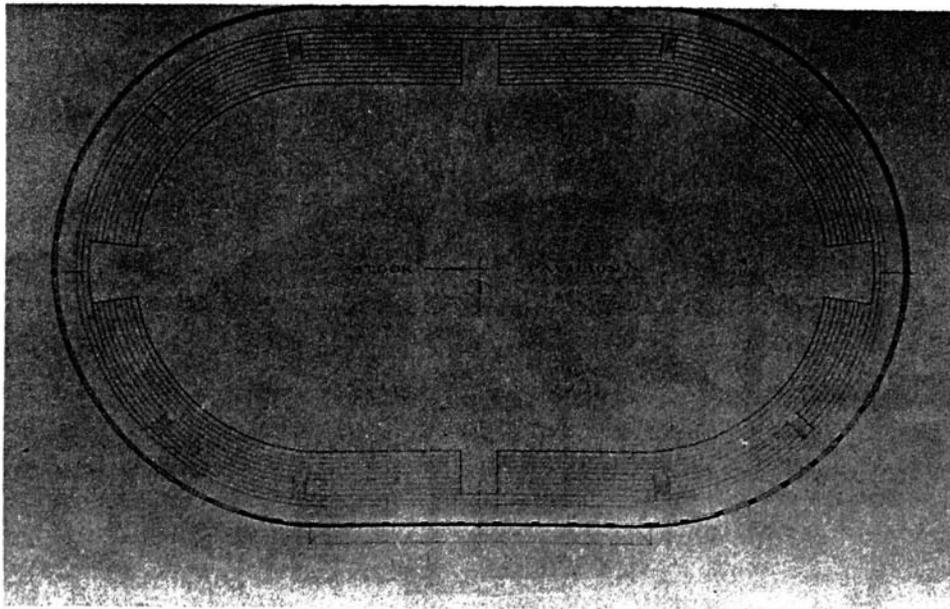


Figure 90. Stock Pavilion at 1893 Columbian Exposition. Daniel H. Burnham, *The Final Official Report of the Director of Works of the World's Columbian Exposition*, Part One, Vol., 2 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 40j.

Curved to match the track's bend, spectators had a better view. Examples in Kansas of curved grandstands include one built in 1904 (Figure 91). This the oldest grandstand in the state and now is part of Anthony Downs, a race track in Greenwood County. Figure 92 is the WPA-built grandstand

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., Vol. 1, 54.

in Belleville, Republic County and it also has a similar curve.<sup>111</sup> It is difficult, however, to draw a strong correlation between the Columbian Exposition stock pavilion and grandstands in Kansas.

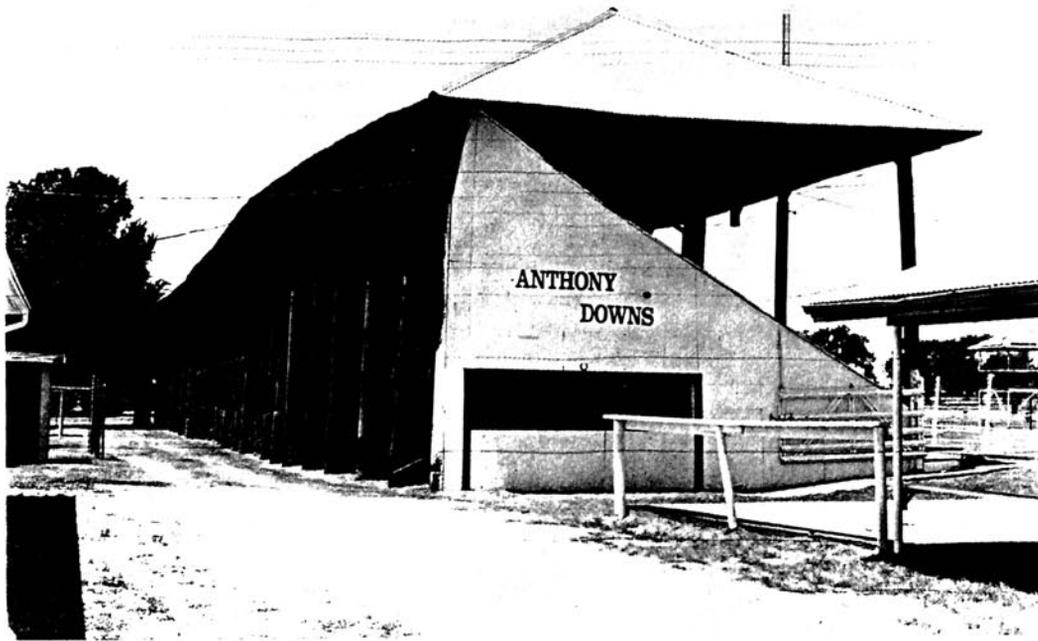


Figure 91. 1904 Anthony Downs Grandstand.  
Photo by author.

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<sup>111</sup>The curve is still common on larger Kansas grandstands. The seats have a better view of the straight-away.



Figure 92. WPA Grandstand, Republic County, Belleville.  
Photo by author.

The Chicago fair's other livestock buildings are described only as "plainly constructed" barns. They were located in the southern portion of the grounds near the livestock pavilion, and there are no photos of the buildings. From what can be seen behind posing horses, cattle or mules, the buildings are similar to existing fair building patterns with common gable-front, wooden, rectangular barns. Philadelphia's exposition used ones that were very similar. Figure 93 shows that the siding ran vertically, however, not horizontally.

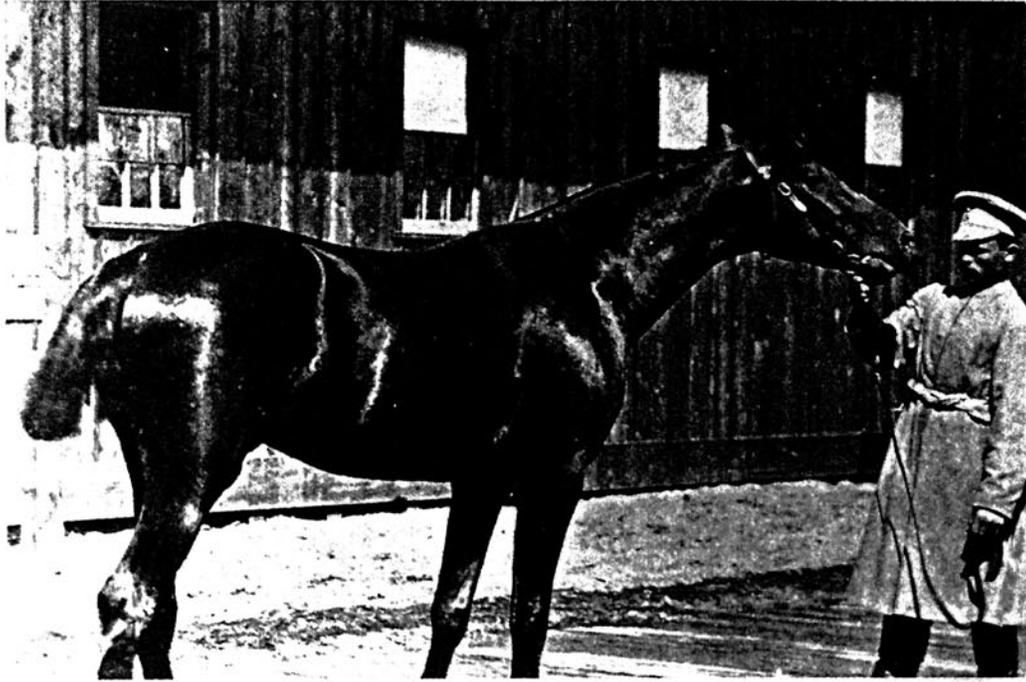


Figure 93. Livestock Building, 1893 Columbian Exposition.  
Hubert Howe Bancroft. *The Book of the Fair*. Vol. 2 (Chicago: The  
Bancroft Company Publishers, 1895), 615.

One unusual landscape element was layout of the stock buildings shown in Figure 94. L-shaped livestock barns are arranged in a rectangle around a court yard barn.

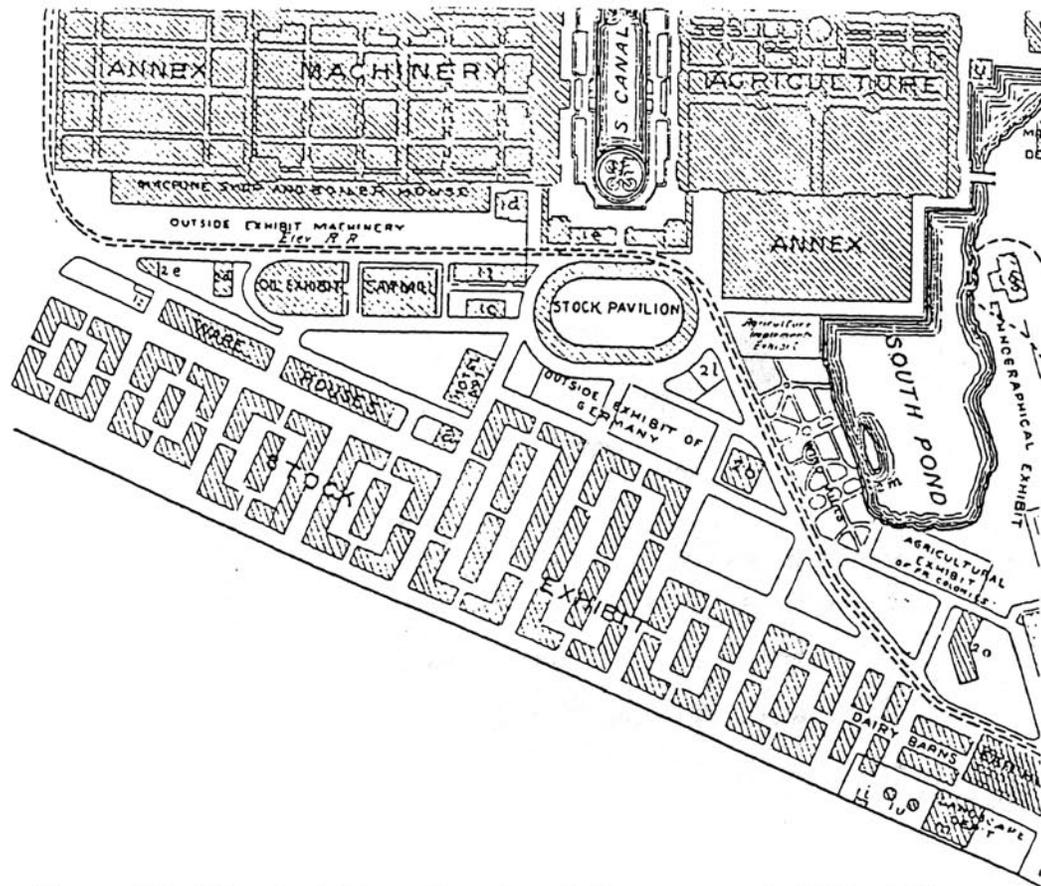


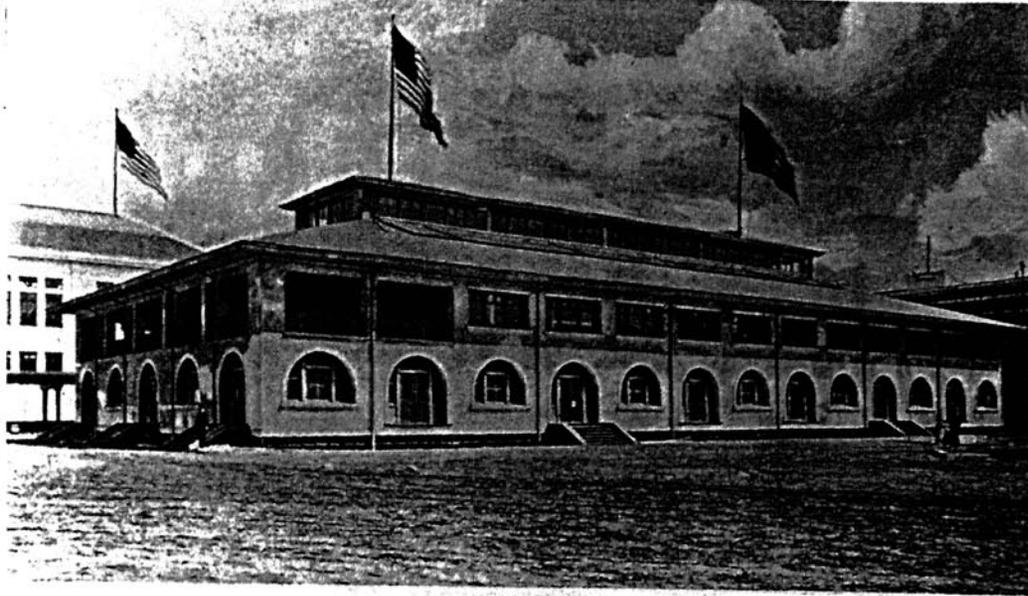
Figure 94. Livestock Barn Courtyard Arrangement. Hubert Howe Bancroft. *The Book of the Fair*. Vol. 1 (Chicago: The Bancroft Company Publishers, 1895), 54.

Livestock buildings with a notable pattern were the dairy barns, designed by C. B. Atwood, of Chicago. Figure 95 shows that they had hipped and monitor roofs with a partial clerestory.<sup>112</sup> An exhibition building shown in Figure 96 in Washington County constructed by the WPA, is almost identical in form, but of stone. But it too was not radically

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<sup>112</sup>Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, Vol. 1, 56. Atwood designed about fifty minor buildings, annexes, light posts, entrance ways, etc., for the Chicago fair.

different from similar rectangular, monitor-roofed buildings already in use.<sup>113</sup>



THE DAIRY BUILDING

Figure 95. Dairy Building, 1893 Columbian Exposition.  
Hubert Howe Bancroft. *The Book of the Fair*, Vol. 2  
(Chicago: The Bancroft Company Publishers, 1895), 621.

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<sup>113</sup>This is the only example in Kansas where there appears a direct correlation with the Chicago Expositions architecture. At the local level, traditional architectural patterns persisted instead.

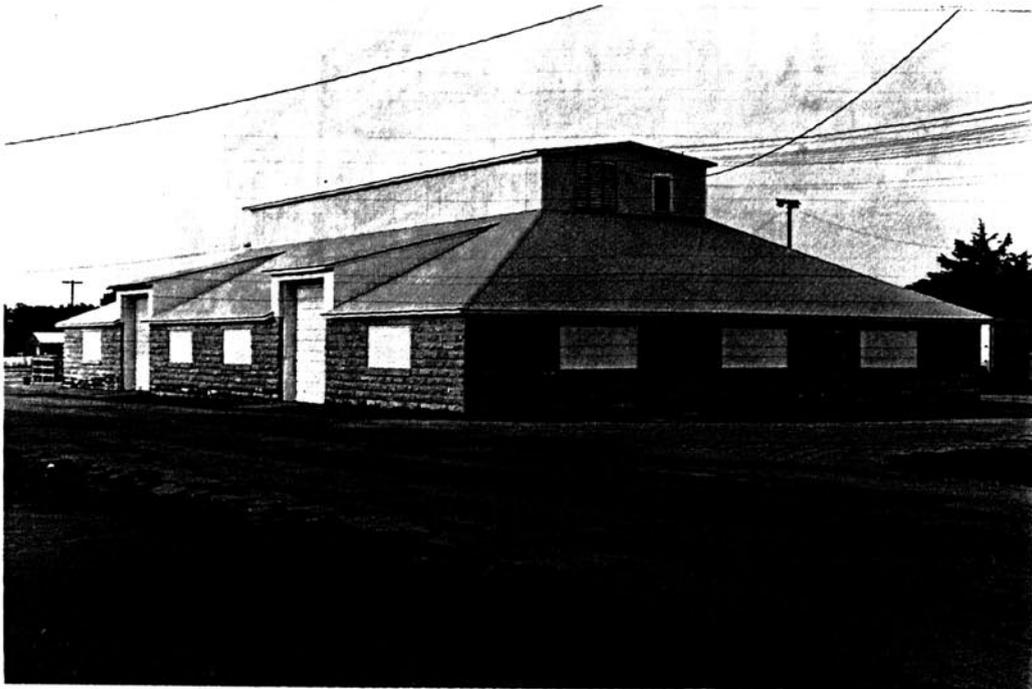


Figure 96. 1937 Washington County, Washington.  
Photo by author.

The 1893 Columbian Exposition affected Kansas more in the sophistication of the midway and entertainment than in new building patterns. Figures 97 and 98 show late twentieth-century midway architecture of tents, false fronts, and train cars creatively co-opted into use. The Tyrolean Alps, Ferris wheel and moving pictures at this Kansas fair echo the Chicago Exposition's midway. The Exposition introduced the term "midway plaisance," and with it some common understanding of its entertainment context. Although a form of the midway with all types of eating stands and early rides had made incursions into Kansas county fairs long before 1893, after the Chicago fair, they were more readily accepted as part of a fairscape.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>A Linn County 1892 premium book describes stands and a swing ride. Neely (*The Agricultural Fair*, 203) has noted that state and county fairs emulated the midways of world's fairs.

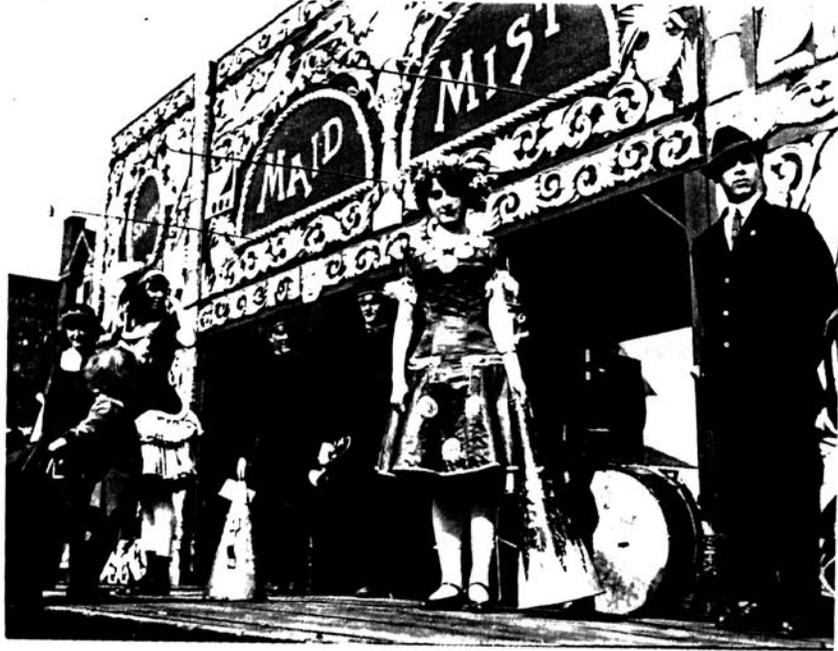


Figure 97. Unknown Midway, c. 1900.  
KSHS Photo Collection.



Figure 98. Unknown Midway, c. 1900.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

The pattern of displaying women's production separately continued at the Chicago fair. Women were distinguished in separate space as they had been in Philadelphia. Sophia G. Hayden designed the women's building which was a rectangle, 200' x 400'. Described as feminine, writers contended its grace, delicacy, dimension and scale revealed the sex of its designer. The stated purpose of the exhibits, however, made it clear that "women... were the originators of most of the industrial arts, and that it was not until these became lucrative that they were appropriated by men, and women pushed aside."<sup>115</sup> Exhibits, however, tended to emphasize articles of refinement in decorative and fancy work from the United States and other countries.

Patterns of discrimination continued when blacks tried to participate in the 1893 Columbian Exposition. They were scarcely more successful than they had been in 1876. Ida B. Wells-Barnett protested their exclusion in a pamphlet and then listed black achievements in arts, music, and sculpture, and in science and technology.<sup>116</sup> The few exhibits by blacks that were included were individual entries mainly in the government building.<sup>117</sup> In Kansas, at least one black newspaper, the *Afro-American Advocate* of Coffeyville, supported Well's protest, while another, the *Topeka Call*, did not.<sup>118</sup> There was contention within the American black community over almost everything about the fair. Frederick Douglass spoke for many, however, when he said that the fair symbolized not the

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<sup>115</sup>Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair*, Vol. 1, 267. See pages 257-296 for a full description of the building and its contents.

<sup>116</sup>Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "The Reason Why The Colored American Is Not In the World's Columbian Exposition," *Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 46-137. First published in 1893.

<sup>117</sup>Ruth M. Winton, "Negro Participation in Southern Expositions, 1881-1915," *Journal of Negro Education* 16 (Winter 1947):34.

<sup>118</sup>Rudwick and Meier, "Black Man in the "White City," 356.

material progress of America, but a moral regression -- the reconciliation of North and South at the expense of Negroes.<sup>119</sup>

The ethnocentrism and racism of the time would have scarcely permitted otherwise. For example, beginning at the 1889 Paris exposition, ethnographic villages with "living" displays were a central component. At the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, there were exhibits of many different groups of peoples: Irish, Javanese, Samoans, Turks, Chinese, Algerians, Tunisians, Dahomeans, American Indians, Laplanders, Arabs, etc. This show made apparent the Darwinian notion which was popular among anthropologists that culture and race began with the "low" and ended with the "high," in a progression of change as cultures moved from savagery to civilization. Some felt that the intermingling of cultures at the fair would not only improve the savage races, but also allow the white

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 361. In Southern expositions such as the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895, black artisans designed their own building, 276' x 112'. It had a four cornered pavilion with a tower over the center. The classical pediments over the entries were filled with scenes showing both blacks in slavery and in emancipation. Fourteen states sent exhibits, as well as most black educational institutions. At the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in Nashville in 1897, black men again constructed their building with exhibits similar to those at Atlanta stressing Negro achievements and progress. The building for blacks was similar to the general style of architecture at Nashville, Spanish Renaissance. At the South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition in 1901-2, they followed the Hispanic mission theme; and in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1907, one of colonial design. See Winton, "Negro Participation in Southern Expositions, 37, 38-41.

In 1915, African-Americans had their own exposition, The Negro Historical and Industrial Exposition at the Richmond, Virginia, fairgrounds. The fair had a special White Folks' day, as there had been special days for blacks at white run fairs. At national expositions or fairs, a pattern repeated itself: blacks and whites had separate space. The space for blacks, however, was separate and unequal.

race to see its responsibility to assist with and care for those making their way up the civilization chain.<sup>120</sup>

Robert Rydell has claimed that the theme of the progression of culture was repeated and intensified at the Trans-Mississippi Fair in Omaha in 1898. Native Americans lived at the fair and gave public performances with sham battles among themselves. Blacks, shown as "jolly, and rollicking" were treated little better in a display that included a village of slave cabins. Another exhibit illustrated the advancement of blacks since emancipation highlighted by Aunt Jemimah serving pancakes in the manufacturing buildings.<sup>121</sup>

In Kansas, Indians were often the "exotic" minority group on display. For example, Sedgwick County was one of the first counties to display Native Americans in 1878. The fair's premium book advertised that "Civilized and Savage Life will be Contrasted -- 100 Indians Will Attend and Compete for Premiums." The rationale for this ethnic display, a contrast of cultures, was made very clear.<sup>122</sup> At the 1879 Marshall County Fair in Marysville, Otoe Indians demonstrated war dances, bow and spear skills, and horsemanship.<sup>123</sup> In Atchison, an 1880 newspaper article advertised Indian ball games, foot races and original war dances at its fair.<sup>124</sup> The most detailed description is for the Third Annual Exposition of the Western National Fair Association, Douglas County in 1882. The premium list noted an Indian encampment with 100 braves, squaws and papooses, "a true picture of Indian Domestic Life." The show included Indian war dances, ball games, and captive chases that were

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<sup>120</sup>George Cotkin, *Reluctant Modernism: American Thought and Culture 1880-1900* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 52-53, 57.

<sup>121</sup>Rydell, "The Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition," 601.

<sup>122</sup>Premium Book for 1878

<sup>123</sup>*The News*, Marshall County, Marysville, September 20, 1879.

<sup>124</sup>*Daily Champion*, Atchison, September 10, 1880.

promoted as novel and instructive.<sup>125</sup> The inclusion of Indians shows lasted in Kansas at least until 1931, when Potawatomi attended the Phillips County Fair (see Figure 99).



Figure 99. Potawatomi Indians at the Phillips County Fair, 1931.  
KSHS Photo Collection.

The only variation in such display patterns appears to have been in 1894, when the Haskell Institute participated in Bismarck fair in Lawrence. They represented the advancement of Indians through "civilizing." The teachers and administrators were succeeding at teaching the "much-neglected Indian in the ways of self-advancement." Indians had been accorded an education "through schools and grounds set apart for their

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<sup>125</sup>Premium List of the Western National Fair Association for September 18-23, 1882.

special use and privileges." Native Americans also put on a military display with regular army drills and a military band.<sup>126</sup>

Despite the interest in the Columbian Exposition and the Kansas exhibit, popular interest in Kansas fairs continued to ebb. The problems of farming in the last decade of the nineteenth century were so obvious that even the Kansas State Board of Agriculture recognized its responsibility to serve its constituents better. The Board's president admitted that its previous reports, focused on boosting the state to outsiders, had not served farmers. The Board's report of hard times in 1895-96 was an agricultural report that included practical and helpful articles written for farmers on crops and cultivation practices.<sup>127</sup>

The populist rebellion signaled farmers' frustration and discontent with an industrializing America. They perceived the State Board of Agriculture served the state, not them. The Board spoke for business; it did not address the problems that rapid industrialization posed for an agrarian state.<sup>128</sup> The Board finally realized, however, that farmers needed help to survive.

Poised to enter a period of transition, the look of Kansas fairs during the traditional period signaled to potential investors, immigrants and the public that communities had the means and vision to succeed culturally, financially and agriculturally. With permanent fairgrounds and buildings, the landscapes' visual forms clearly stated the sites' intent. Their entrepreneurial mission was determined by successful state-fair models and by the popular 1853 Crystal Palace Exhibition. The patterns are clear from photos, maps and Sanborns that cross, octagon and clerestory buildings were important and recognized forms associated with promotional fairs. These forms elicited pride in Americans who

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<sup>126</sup>*Kansas Farmer* 32 (October 17, 1894): 5.

<sup>127</sup>Gilbert C. Fite, *The Farmers' Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 131.

<sup>128</sup>Clanton, "Kansas Populism," 215.

identified them with their own accomplishments. By looking at these traditional-era fairs the visual message they impart is different than the message more frequently given by those who have studied fairs. Instead of an agricultural focus, these fair-specific landscapes and buildings proclaimed a powerful association with achievement, and success.

It is worthwhile to place the traditional era of Kansas fairs within the framework of reciprocity. Figure 100 summarizes the traditional era of fairs when there was a strong national regard for material progress and entrepreneurial activities.<sup>129</sup> Interest in agrarianism (the concern and esteem for land and its distribution, ownership, cultivation and tenure) was more in the domain of gentlemen farmers, those who emphasized the land's value as a commodity rather than the common farmer's use of it to produce a livelihood. The agricultural elite, along with community merchants, used Kansas fairs to help market land and to sell products and goods in an increasingly industrialized and market driven economy. Associated with this mission, the image of Kansas county fairs included distinctive architecture based on Crystal Palace forms, and dedicated fairs. Table 1 shows the fair attributes of these traditional era fairs. Table 2 conveys the societal conditions at work that affected fairs' mission and purpose.<sup>130</sup>

Composed mainly of merchants and businessmen, traditional era agricultural societies needed farmers to bring evidence of their success to the fair to advertise a county or town. Farmers needed fairs too for social contact and as a way to learn more about new consumer products and services. But as the turn of the century approached, both groups began reacting to changing societal conditions, and Kansans began to find

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<sup>129</sup>The idea of material progress was greatly valued then. Jean Matthews explains in *Toward a New Society: American Thought and Culture 1800-1830*, 137, that America, as material abundance increased, moved from concern about the past to focus on the future. The idea of progress, formerly seen as a divine gift, was now often viewed as earned.

<sup>130</sup>These tables will show change over time when external factors from the transitional and contemporary eras are added.

traditional fairs no longer suitable to convey the visual message they wished. Reciprocity assumes that if communities develop resistance to the cultural message in fairs, then they will change them and by 1900 this process of change was underway.

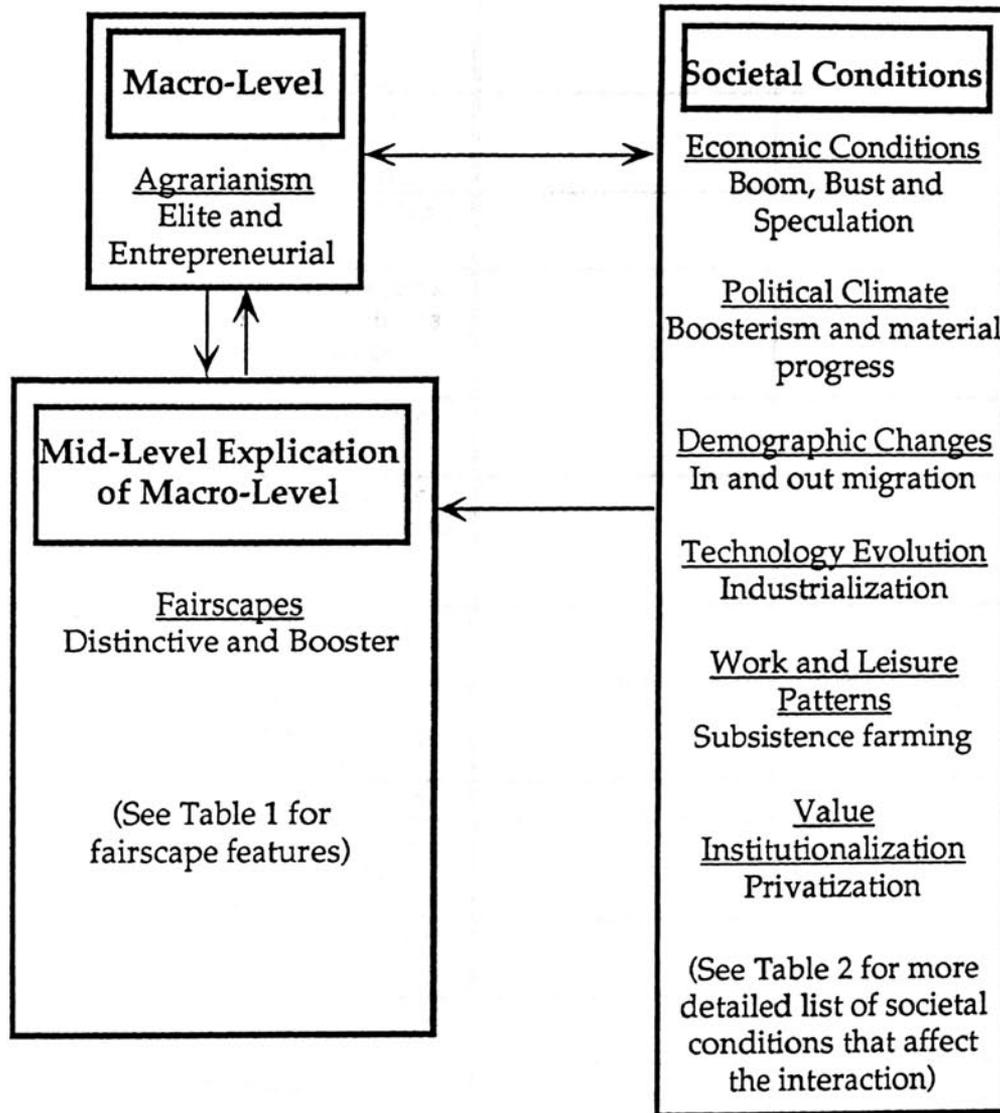


Figure 100. Relationships and Reciprocal Interaction Affecting Traditional Era Fairs.

Table 1. Traditional Fairscape Attributes.

<u>Attributes</u>	<u>Traditional Fairs</u>	<u>(Transitional Fairs)</u>	<u>(Contemporary Fairs)</u>
Building Shape	irregular and rectangular building		
Roof Line	monitor, polygonal or gable roofs		
Bldg. Material	wood buildings		
Open/Closed Structures	open livestock pens and sheds and closed barns		
Site Designation	fair specific sites		
Architecture	fair specific buildings based on Crystal Palace		
Showing Facilities	show rings		
Horse Facilities	horse barns/racing stables		
Track Type	horse racing		
Judging Facilities	judging stands for horse racing		
Dedicated/Multi-use	dedicated fair space		
Fencing	tight board fencing		
Entry	entrance gates		
Concession/Dining	concession and dining halls		
Sport Facilities	baseball diamonds		

Table 1. Cont.

<u>Attributes</u>	<u>Traditional Fairs</u>	<u>(Transitional Fairs)</u>	<u>(Contemporary Fairs)</u>
Carnival/ Midway	midway/rides		
Tents	tents		
Exhibit Facilities	floral halls and agricultural pavilions		
Implement Facilities	implement grounds		
Water Sources	by water source and near town		
Camping	camping		
Railroad	near railroad		
Shade	shade		

Table 2. Societal Conditions During Traditional Era (1854-1900).

<u>Societal Conditions</u>	<u>Traditional Era</u>	<u>Transitional Era</u>	<u>Contemporary Era</u>
Economic Conditions	<p>cycles of drought and depression, boom and bust</p> <p>speculative investments</p> <p>distress and unrest due to instabilities</p> <p>farming moves into market economy</p> <p>agricultural prices fall</p> <p>investment money diminishes</p> <p>subsistence farming patterns</p>		
Political Climate	<p>boosterism and material progress</p> <p>race and gender emphasized</p> <p>farmers scorned nationally</p> <p>farmers entrench morally and populism rises</p>		
Demography	<p>in and out migration with cycles of boom and bust</p> <p>state population increases</p>		

Table 2. Cont.

<u>Societal Condi- tions</u>	<u>Traditional Era</u>	<u>Transitional Era</u>	<u>Contemporary Era</u>
<p>Technology Evolu- tion</p>	<p>industrialization increases livestock breeding specializes transportation revolutionizes (trains) farm machinery sophistication communications improve grain storage facilities evolve</p>		
<p>Work and Leisure</p>	<p>farm, work mostly subsistence mechanization begins to ease work load farm units largely self-contained recreation (fairs) adult focused animals remain labor source</p>		

Table 2. Cont.

<u>Societal Condi- tions</u>	<u>Traditional Era</u>	<u>Transitional Era</u>	<u>Contemporary Era</u>
Value Insti- tionaliza- tion	rapid land settlement minimal fair funding fairs privately owned agriculture and farming education land-grant colleges agricultural research gambling, drinking prohibitions		