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Through the years


Photos courtesy of Kathy Patterson
In the 1950s, the Fayette County fair took place during the last week of July. It was Ohio’s first county fair of the year. The amusement rides that the Gooding Amusement Company provided had been freshly painted, and after a long winter, the midway barkers were eager to hawk their games and merchandise. The fairgrounds was in tip-top shape; its buildings had been freshly painted.

Credit for the outstanding fairs of the 1950s belonged to the hard-working, talented fair board led by its president, Ray Bradenburg. He owned the General Motors dealership on Clinton Avenue in Washington Court House. Half of the board’s 12 members came from the city and half from the county. Among the board members in the 1950s were: Walter Sollars, a prominent farmer; George Steen, owner of Steen’s department store; Sam Marting, a breeder of Hereford cattle; and G. Damon Baker, a road contractor and farm operator.

Frank Ellis, the advertising manager at the Record-Herald, was the fair board’s secretary. From a small building behind the grandstand, he kept everything running smoothly during fair week. Ellis wore a straw hat; he walked briskly and smoked cigars.

The rides, sideshows, games of skill, and food concessionaires could be found at the same locations every year. Games for prizes, a shooting gallery, and a place where a series of successful basketball shots earned a teddy bear were situated in a row on the north side of the racetrack facing the midway.

Fairgoers walking through the midway heard loud, cheerful music from the merry-go-round. Most rides in the 1950s cost 25 cents. Besides the merry-go-round, there was the ferris wheel, a ride called the “whip,” and a ride on which two large cylinders with screaming thrill seekers inside spun 360 degrees intermittently from each end of a long steel beam that rotated clockwise.

There was of course a wide variety of food and cold drinks. One vendor spun pink cotton candy from a large, rapidly-rotating steel pan. An elderly man working from a small white trailer prepared French fries. He served up the fries in cone-shaped white cups; bottles of vinegar were available for those wanting to add the sour flavor of vinegar to...
Mara Simonson was so excited to win Guys and Gals Lead class at the fair in 2008.

Photo courtesy of Kathy Patterson
Kathy Patterson recently shared photos from various fairs throughout the years. Pictured is Sara, Kathy’s daughter, during her first year at the fair in 2007.

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Harness racing has been a big part of the Fayette County Fair for many years. Pictured is a “vintage” photo of the Fayette County Fair Midway and track.

Harness horse racers from across the state gather each year in Fayette County for some intense races.

The sport has evolved into a project for youth as well and has been shown at the fair every few years.

1950’s

From page 4

t heir potatoes. And there was a vendor who sold shamrock-shaped waffles that measured about four inches across. The waffle man sprinkled the waffles with confection sugar after frying them in cooking oil. His waffles sold three for a dollar.

Another concessionaire at the Fayette County fair was a man who made drinks of water, ice, sugar, and lemons from the tailgate of his station wagon parked close to the grandstand. He made the drinks, which he called “shake-ups,” by first putting a couple chunks of lemon in a heavy glass and then smashing the fruit with a round piece of wood. After adding a scoop of sugar, he placed the open end of a waxed paper cup on top of the glass and shook the two containers vigorously to mix the drink. A lemon “shake-up” sold for a quarter.

At a tent not far from the merry-go-round, fairgoers saw a swinging chair suspended from a scale. For 50 cents a man or woman could be weighed and awarded a Kewpie doll if the chair’s operator failed to guess the person’s correct weight by more than three pounds. He seldom missed.

Every fair included several midway shows. “Percilla the Monkey Girl” and “Larry the Alligator Boy” appeared at a couple of fairs in the 1950s. Percilla was covered from head to toe with long, thick monkey-like hair, while Larry had ichthyosis, a condition that made his skin hard and scaly like the skin of an alligator. Larry and Percilla were husband and wife: their last name was Bejano. Sporting sunglasses and clad in a bathrobe, Larry stood on a platform in front of his tent theater and cajoled the fairgoers gathered around him to enter the tent for 50 cents and hear about what he pitched as “the world’s most unusual married
Some 20 years ago, Percilla and Larry Bejano were featured in a cable TV documentary that profiled retired carnival and circus performers. The couple lived in a pleasant mobile home park in Florida. “We have had a good life,” they said.

Another midway attraction enabled fairgoers to observe a pile of rattlesnakes nestled inside a large glass case. Anyone who paid the 25 cents price of admission could listen to a snake handler explain the habits and the behaviors of rattlesnakes before he squeezed the fangs of a rattler against the rim of a pilsner glass to extract its poisonous venom.

One year in the early 1950s, fairgoers paid 50 cents to climb the stairs of a large, round amphitheater. After reaching the top, the spectators stood around the rim of the amphitheater and looked down at costumed chimpanzees racing small cars powered by gasoline engines around the walls of the circular structure. Centrifugal force kept the fast-moving, little cars from falling. The smell of gasoline fumes from the cars’ noisy engines filled the air.

The Merchants’ Building at the far north side of the fairgrounds housed the displays of local merchants along with plates of candy, cookies, cake, vegetables, and field corn that had won first, second, third, and fourth-place ribbons. Also displayed in the Merchants’ Building were several dozen photographs taken by members of the Fayette County Camera Club. The photographs that won ribbons in the fair’s photo competitions had their prize-winning ribbons attached to them. Photographers who frequently won ribbons were Delbert Hays, Belford Carpenter, Harry Fitchthorn, and John Arthur Leland, my father.

In the 1950s, the fair’s harness races took place on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday afternoons. Members of the Washington Lions’ Club sold the racing programs for a quarter each. The trotters and pacers moved along the backstretch of the racetrack opposite a lush, green cornfield on the south side of the Leesburg pike. The crowd in the packed grandstand heard music from the merry-go-round and the crackling sound of rifle fire from the shooting gallery. Racing fans smelled the aroma of sizzling hamburgers coming from the food concession operated by the Jeffersonville Lions’ Club at the east end of the grandstand.

Between races the well-rehearsed Washington High School band played “golden oldies” such as “Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White” and “Mary Is a Grand Old Name” from the bandstand located near the racetrack’s finish line. The band members were all dressed in white: the girls in white blouses and shorts, the boys in white shirts and trousers. Midway through
the day’s racing program, Ray Brandenburg, accompanied by another fair board member, drove a small wagon pulled by a pair of donkeys across the racetrack to an open area between the judges’ stand and the bandstand. The wagon carried watermelons that Brandenburg and his partner cut into pieces for the band members. The band ended each day’s performance with its signature closing number, “Show Me the Way to Go Home.”

The 3-year-old pace took place on Thursday afternoon, and the fair board advertised Thursday as the “big day” at the races. The Fayette County fair showcased local horses and drivers, and they won many of the races. Among the local horsemen competing were McKinley Kirk, Harold Laymon, Frank Lanum, Ronnie Cornwell, Eddie Boyer, and Ray Garrity. Among the out-of-town drivers who came regularly to the fair were Porter Martin and Forest Short from Circleville; Clayton Cox from Wilmington; Doc McMillen from London; and Dick Buxton from Urbana.

Several horses that were victorious at the fair in the 50s went on to win high profile races at the commercial raceways. These standout horses included the pacers Times’s Square and Amortizor and the trotters Steamin’ Demon and Senator Frost. Amortizor, Steamin’ Demon, and Senator Frost established world records.

In the 1950s, as in any year, the livestock barns at the fairgrounds were filled with cattle, sheep, and hogs shown by 4-H club members. Crafts made by 4-H members were displayed beneath the grandstand and in the Merchants’ Building. Fayette County’s extension agents, W. W. “Monty” Montgomery and Phil Grover, did everything they could to make the fair an enjoyable experience for the boys and girls who participated in 4-H.

Hopefully these recollections of some past Fayette County fairs will trigger happy memories.
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The opening ceremony of the Fayette County Fair has been a time-honored tradition. Pictured is the opening ceremony from 1972.

Dave Weade crowning the 1972 Fayette County Fair Queen Susan (Dundon) Jordan.

The 1971 Fayette County Fair Queen Debbie (Hammond) Weade pinning a banner on Jordan.

The 1972 Fayette County Fair Queen and her court, pictured (L to R): front row: Attendant Diane (Gerber) Thompson, Queen Susan (Dundon) Jordan, and Attendant Stacey Johns. Back row: unknown Ohio State Fair Queen and 1971 Queen Debbie (Hammond) Weade.
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Childhood, girlhood, youth and beyond: 1950-2017

By Dr. Hannah Case
For the Record-Herald

My grandfather Karl Kay introduced me to the wonders of the fair before my 6th birthday. We posed together in the photo booth tent, and he accompanied me to the pony rides. I never have forgotten! Every July thereafter my parents and grandparents faithfully escorted me (and later my little sister, Nelly Maude, too) to the fairgrounds for fun and adventures.

At age 9 I joined the Magic Makers 4-H Club with all my best friends from Cherry Hill and Mrs. Wanda Wilson as our leader. We eagerly decorated our booth under the grandstand and won a prize for it! That same year Mrs. Wilson suggested I participate in the sewing demonstrations competition even though I was too young...
A love story begins at the Fayette Co fair

By Kim Penwell

Ward Beam Daredevils performed at the Fayette County Fair for several years. In 1952, my uncle, Gene Lyons, was the headliner that jumped the buses and my father, Junior Lyons, was asked to be an extra for them during this show. My father performed the ring of fire on a motorcycle at that show. My mother attended the fair with some friends and went to see the show. Her and my father met after the show was over and that is how their love story started, resulting in a 40-year marriage and six children.

If not for the Fayette County Fair, my siblings and I would not be here today.

Beyond

From page 12

to win an award. I’ll never forget arriving at the tent with my mother Althf and all I needed to put together a needle case. I was fitted for a microphone (first time ever) and could not conceal my shock at hearing my voice for the first time projected through speakers. A kind judge praised my performance but also indicated that a midriff-shorts costume was not really acceptable on stage. Some years later I did win a silver tray for a cookie recipe recommended by my mother.

As members of the Washington Junior High Marching Band, my schoolmates and I provided musical entertainment for those attending the horse races. We were seated in the middle ground between the racing lanes and thoroughly enjoyed playing show tunes directed by Mr. Robert Newman. And, of course, I loved watching those Standardbreds!

Without fail, summer vacation in WCH always held the promise of fun at the fair where in the past Grandma Nell Kay had won blue ribbons for her flower arrangements and where the pony tent ever called to me, even when political campaigns sent handsome young men to represent their candidates in the 1960s.

As my own children grew up and came from Pennsylvania to visit Mom and Dad during summer break, the family always enjoyed a day at the fair munching on those unforgettable french fries and drinking that fresh squeezed lemonade, admiring the livestock, and lining up for the rides, in particular the ponies!

When I retired in 2004 and settled at home with my Mom, I again had the opportunity to attend the fair. I made a bee-line for the pony tent where horse-farm owner Marty graciously permitted me to ride once she saw I met the under-100-lbs. weight criterion. I have enclosed a photo of me and my adorable mount. I asked Marty his name, and when she answered “Lucky,” I declared myself to be the really lucky one! Also enclosed is a photo of the longhorn bull Marty had brought along.

My passion for the fair has never waned. As a grandma myself, I escorted my little ones to the fair and the pony tent (of course!) each summer. They have not forgotten our adventures, including tours of the livestock barns led by my class of 1962 classmate Paul Cummings. (Thanks again, Paul!) Needless to say, when summer returns each year, I think of our dear fair and wish I could ride the ponies once again.
Fayette County Junior Fair Participants

Mara Simonson showing in the open class lamb show in 2019.


Alli Knecht winner of hog showmanship in 2019.

Karlee Johnson and Alli Knecht, winners of their age division in the Guys and Gals Lead in 2019.

Alli Knecht showing the reserve champion goat in 2019.
junior fair participants continued

Aiden Knecht 2019

Mara Simonson at the lamb show in 2019.

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Bartruff works hard at the Fayette County Fair

Being a part of 4-H getting to show the animals my 11 year old son Hayden Bartruff raises year round, 4-H has taught him so much. And we all get to share our love we have for animals together as a family. It’s a little different than sports. And means more than a ribbon.

Even knowing he has been blessed with placing well every year with his market goats dairy goats and market rabbits.

Our best memory is two years ago when he showed rabbits for the first time with his goats. He was in the goat barn and couldn’t make it to the rabbit barn and we got a call that his meat rabbits placed first in his class. And sixth place overall out of 100 plus rabbits.
County fair is about family

By Kathy Patterson

I moved to Fayette County about 26 years ago from Virginia. I had never been to a county fair before moving here. On my first visit to the Fair, I was hooked.

The families working together with their kids and all the different projects. There was something amazing going on in the barns, family, friends and camaraderie with the kids of all ages. It was something I wanted my family to experience.

Both my girls showed lambs for about nine years. They really enjoyed it and we have made lifelong friends from it. It has taught them a lot like responsibility, caring for animals, following rules, competition and that hard work really does pay off. My granddaughter has started showing animals at the Fair and a new chapter begins.

Every year we have a family night at

The Patterson family always loves their summer family night at the Fayette County Fair.
Family

From page 18

The fair. This is the time when all my kids and grandkids meet at the fair and we eat dinner, play games and ride rides. We all look forward to that special night at the Fayette County Fair every year. I can’t explain the joy that fills my heart being there every year with my family. Cause isn’t that what life is about? Family.

The Fayette County Fair is always the high point of our summer. I will forever cherish all the memories at the Fayette County Fair.

Through the years

Cow show in 2004.
Entries into the vegetable judging in 2004.

4-H exhibitors decorating the 4-H Barn in 2009.
Eli Kerwood is a rabbit showman in Fayette County and has attained multiple ribbons for his projects.

Devin Davis enjoys a pony ride at the 2019 Fayette County Fair.

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Family ties at the fair

Cousins, Libby Johnson and Aiden Knecht, placed first and second in hog showmanship.

Big brother Aiden Knecht giving his sister Alli a pep talk before her first swine showmanship. It worked and both won their age divisions in July 2019.

Alli Knecht heading home after a successful week at the 2019 Fayette County Fair.
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Penny Johnson at the horse show.

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The Fayette County Fair has entertained the crowds for years. Pictured is the Bull Mania Show from 2000.

The new fence and gate that were built for the horse paddock years ago.
Through the years

A bull at the fair in 2004.

I have enjoyed being part of the fair since 2015, being live on the radio the Monday of fair, having a booth in the Mahan Building and sponsoring one of the horse races with the Chamber of Commerce.

I first earned my real estate license in 2003 and opened my own real estate company in 2007. We moved from Circleville to Washington Court House in 2010.

As the mother of 2 boys, we raised meat chickens and did various other projects at the Pickaway County Fair. The work and discipline 4-H teaches is great preparation for life!

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Aubrey Schwartz 2019 Showman of Showmen. She also went on to win Showman of Showmen. This was her third year in a row of winning overall Rabbit Showman (winner 2017, 2018 and 2019) and competing in Showman of Showmen.

Alexis Schwartz 2016 Overall Rabbit Showman. She was also Overall Rabbit showman for four years (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). Also pictured Bethany Reiterman 2016 Fair Queen.
Fair is a staple for the Reeves family

4-H has been a huge part of the Reeves girls lives over the years. Here is Morgan after her meat pen judging.

Brooke Reeves has always enjoyed the carousel, she will be graduating from Washington High School this year.

Brooke Reeves loves the fair so much she chose to have a portion of her senior pictures taken there with one of her 4-H projects.

Brooke Reeves enjoying a ride.
For the Reeves family, the Fayette County Fair has been a staple. Pictured is Morgan Reeves with her friends in front of this beautiful Ferris wheel! Her favorite memories of the fair always includes her best friends!
Through the years

Ashley Skaggs Musselman in 2004 after a win in the dog show.

Barrel racing at the Fayette County Fair.

Local resident Mekia Rhoades enjoying a ride in 2009.

Photos courtesy of Kathy Patterson
**Pony Ride from Back in Time**

Matt and Bob Knecht enjoying pony rides at the Fayette County Fair in 1977.

**Reeves Makes History As Alpaca Princess**

Ali Reeves said her favorite memory from 11 years in 4-H at the Fayette County Junior Fair was in 2018 when she had the honor to be the first ever Alpaca Princess, making history.

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Spangler an enthusiastic patron to the fair

Sadie Spangler, a local 4-year-old, has been to the Fayette County Fair her whole life. Here she is enjoying one of the rides at the fair.

Another hit with Sadie are the pony rides which are a fan favorite at the fair.

Through the years

The ABN booth in 2004.

Judging for the lamb show in 2009.

Photos courtesy of Kathy Patterson
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Mother fondly recalls fun fair memories

By Tammy Kirkpatrick

There are truly too many great memories of the Fayette County Fair to count. They span from watching the great care and hard work that the participants put into their projects to witnessing the community come together to support their local youth.

Of course my greatest memories are watching my children grow and learn responsibility through their livestock animals. Moreover, watching a brother-sister team who sincerely want to see each other succeed.

There are two memories that stand out for me as their parent, one was a time when Taylor won her showmanship class in the senior division. They had run out of trophies for the younger divisions that year, Taylor went to the pen of a young girl who had just won her class and gave her trophy to that young girl. Certainly a proud mom moment!

Knowing the time and effort Trevor and Taylor put into their livestock, when they compete head to head, it is always a treat! It had been typical that Trevor would come out at the top for overall showman. One year, Taylor outshined her big brother for overall showman and he was the first to give her a hug right in the middle of the show ring!

Tears of joy from a proud parent, those are my fondest Fayette County Fair memories.
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Easter, Wilson remember fair fondly

Amanda Wilson, 12, shows off her first place blue ribbon at the 2002 Fayette County Fair. On proud display is her 6-year-old sister, Jessie Brown.

2002 Small Animal Queen Maggie Easter is all smiles as she poses among lots of rabbit trophies. Maggie and her family were rabbit pros.
Jordans participate in Fayette County Fair over the years

Christa Jordan with her project.

Christa Jordan and her project in 1991

Jennifer Jordan and her project in 1990.

Jennifer Jordan at the fair.
Susan Jordan showing off her style.

Christa Jordan McKelvey in 1987 at the Fayette County Fair.
1961 Junior Fair Queen contrasts Then and Now

Submitted article

The 1961 Fayette County Junior Fair Queen, Alice Craig from Bloomingburg, reminisced recently about the differences in the queen competition and responsibilities from then to now, nearly 60 years later.

Craig was the seventh queen selected, as the event in Fayette County began in 1955 with the crowning of Sally Reiff. In those first years, the high school girls did not apply—a reasonable number were selected by Extension Office staff—nor did they even go through any sort of culling-out audition in front of experienced judges. Instead, the competition was simply a popularity contest, with all Fayette County 4-H and FFA members eligible to vote one ballot apiece.

There also were only a handful of occasions during fair week when the queen and/or her two attendants were expected to present awards to winners: at the important animal shows, the style review, and the like. Craig, in looking through a very old box of clippings, was able to find only four “queenly” photographs of herself clipped from the Record-Herald. The first, shortly after the counting of the ballots, was taken in her home on Jones Road; it showed her pulling a just-baked cake out of the oven (thus exhibiting suitable “domestic skills,” even though most of her projects toward the end of her nine years in 4-H dealt with livestock).

Two photos were published after the crowning ceremony: 1960 Queen Carol Baker putting a cardboard crown on her successor’s head; and attendants Carolyn Dill and Karen Carmen sitting on either side of Queen Alice as all three watched the rest of the grandstand activities. Then the following July, Craig was photographed crowning 1962 Junior Fair Queen Beverly Owens. All four photos were merely in black-and-white—no color photos, no photos with dozens of buyers posing behind, say, a champion steer or a reserve champion market hog.

Thus being fair royalty back in the first decade did not demand much time away from the exciting days of Fayette County Fair Week, which vied with 4-H Camp Clifton as the best week of the whole summer! The week started with clubs competing to craft the best fair booth, and continued with individuals putting on demonstrations, or modeling home-sewn fashions in the style review, or entertaining crowds in the talent contest.

By the time young people reached their junior or senior year of high school, the most active of the FFA and 4-H members were also serving as junior fair superintendents, and those with livestock projects had the additional responsibility for their animals until sales were completed. It was an exhilarating time for young people from both town and country—and the Midway hasn't even been mentioned!
Macy Gruber has been involved with the Fayette County Fair for years. Pictured is Gruber during the 2012 Style Revue.

Gruber before final drive with her advisor Wayne Arnold.

Gruber’s friend Alyssa Reeves with Gruber following a win as weight class champion with her dairy feeder in 2019.

The Cattle-feeders booth in 2004

Photo courtesy of Kathy Patterson

Gruber before final drive with her advisor Wayne Arnold.

Gruber’s friend Alyssa Reeves with Gruber following a win as weight class champion with her dairy feeder in 2019.

The Cattle-feeders booth in 2004

Photo courtesy of Kathy Patterson

Gruber before final drive with her advisor Wayne Arnold.

Gruber’s friend Alyssa Reeves with Gruber following a win as weight class champion with her dairy feeder in 2019.

The Cattle-feeders booth in 2004

Photo courtesy of Kathy Patterson
Through the years

Kendal, another daughter of Kathy, had her last year at the fair in 2007.

Patrons waiting for a concert at the McDonald's Grandstand in 2004.

Photos courtesy of Kathy Patterson

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Through the years

More rides in 2009.

Photo courtesy of Kathy Patterson
Achieving memories of a lifetime together

By Taylor Kirkpatrick

My brother, Trevor, and I have been around livestock for the better part of our lives. We were so blessed to grow up with such a strong support system. Some people may even say that we have been pretty successful. That all depends on how a person measures success I guess. The hardware is neat and all and the banners and ribbons will fade, but the memories will last forever. The memories are too many to count as we have traveled all over the country to show pigs throughout our journey.

One of my better memories was the year Trevor and I achieved overall Grand Champion and Reserve Champion in 2007. The reality is that it wasn’t about the “congratulations,” trophies or the keepsakes that we received, it was about the sacrifices we made of our time and efforts along the way. Most of all, what is more amazing is accomplishing that amazing goal as a brother, sister duo.

We have always been competitive in about everything we do, the joy isn’t just about achieving your goal, it is about winning as a team...making each other better and pushing each other to the limits...iron sharpening iron. In 2010, Trevor took a lamb to the fair and got Grand Overall Market Lamb and I raised the Overall Grand Market Hog. That same year, Gordon Gee was visiting and we had the great honor of sharing our excitement with him.

Some of the accomplishments we achieved, we could have only imagined in our dreams...and it is something that we were able to achieve together. THESE are the memories of a lifetime and this is what the fair experience is all about.

Throughout showing livestock, we have met some special people along the way. Lifelong friends, people from all over the country. I am forever grateful for these experiences and how they have shaped my life of which I am forever grateful.

Thank you, Fayette County Fair Family, for sharing those experiences with us.
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