

DEKALB COUNTY FAIR

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The **Grandpa Fair of the South** was chartered on April 15, 1856 by a special act of the state legislature. The first DeKalb County Fair was scheduled to take place October 5-7 of that year, but an early snowfall caused the fair to be postponed until the following Monday.

The fair grew and prospered for the first five years, then Union troops camped on the grounds in 1863, and burned the rail pens that served as stables before they left. No structures were rebuilt until 1872, where these now stand on the present site, 400 yards east of where the first fair was

located. The fairgrounds also served as an encampment location for Confederate General John Hunt Morgan's Kentucky Raiders unit prior to their expedition into Ohio in 1863.

In 1903 high waters washed thousands of sheaves of wheat down Hickman Creek, which runs along the grounds. The flood was so bad that it changed the creek's path, only the first of many recorded floods to destroy the fairgrounds.

In 1908 the DeKalb County Fair became the first county fair in Tennessee, and possibly the entire south, to hold a fair at night. Up until that time all fairs had been during daylight hours only. A tractor engine turning a leased generator



produced the needed electricity. Two new things were introduced to the fair that year, electricity to light the night, and an admission charge to pay for it.

A night fire on June 14, 1914 destroyed the grandstand, causing tents and circus seats to be used until 1919. The existing grandstand was built in 1920, and

a foot bridge across Hickman Creek was built in the location where it now stands to allow access from downtown Alexandria.

Articles from Smith County newspapers reported that the grandstand was purchased from the Rome Fair, disassembled and moved to Alexandria, where it was rebuilt.

In 1924 the fair was expanded from its regular three-day period to become a four-day fair.

A tornado ripped through the area in June 1928, destroying the cattle barn and heavily damaging the women's building, 37 stables, the grandstand, fences, and the bridge.

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