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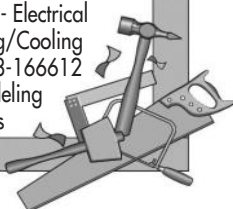
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IF IT'S PILSON IT'S POSSIBLE

Street fairs, homecomings and chautauquas

By Carolyn Cloyd

On Wednesday, Sept. 28, 1898, a Broomcorn Carnival and Free Street Fair opened on Main Street in Arcola. The event boasted rope walking, balloon ascensions, a collection of photographs from the battlefields of the ongoing Spanish American War (Arcola's Company A had been deployed five months earlier), and other forms of entertainment. Rows of booths with merchandise and displays from local businesses lined Main Street and the highlight of the event was a spectacular Broomcorn Palace designed by Allen Kagey and built with the artistic influence of Joe Kanally, a local pharmacist.

The four-day affair marked the beginning of an Arcola tradition of fairs and festivals which continues to this day. Since the first street fair in 1898, the citizens of Arcola have hosted a series of street fairs, homecomings, festivals, and Chautauquas, boosting and promoting local businesses and merchants, providing a variety of entertainments and educational opportunities, and creating an endless array of memories for residents, former residents enticed into coming home by the prospect of fun and old friends, and for the myriad number of visitors who have been attracted by the sights.

Street Fairs

The history of fairs seems to stretch as far back as the history of mankind, with traditions and evidence that point to social gatherings involving storytelling, competitions, and trade. The Bible references what we would consider to be fairs which involved people coming together to designated marketplaces where merchants would sell their wares, and which often included ceremonies marking religious Holy Days and feasts. Over time these markets took on a carnival-like atmosphere with various forms of entertainment, such as storytelling, acting troupes and acrobats, singers, and the pageantry and thrill of tournaments of skill and strength.

The first known agricultural

fair in North America was held in Windsor, Nova Scotia in 1765. The purpose of the fair was to promote local products and provide farming and livestock exhibitions. In 1810, the first agricultural fair in America was organized by Elkanah Watson in Pittsfield, Mass., and in 1841, the state of New York organized its own state agricultural fair.

Agricultural fairs soon became the norm throughout the United States, and as many universities and colleges began opening schools of agriculture, agricultural fairs also began to add an educational component as well, promoting the scientific inquiry of effective ways to grow food. An element of entertainment, often horse racing, was included to draw in larger crowds.

In the late 19th century, cities throughout the United States began holding free street fairs, a new form of entertainment and promotion based on the agricultural fair, but designed to promote downtown merchants and the community. These free street fairs provided multiple sources of free entertainment to draw in larger crowds who would then be introduced to local businesses and merchants and wares and talent.

According to the March 16, 1907, Billboard Magazine, street fairs, which they referred to as a "hybrid thing," being "neither circus nor fair," had become such a popular form of entertainment and so successful for local businesses in larger communities in the late 19th century, that businesspeople in smaller towns who were "primed with the proper spirit of enterprise," began planning street fairs in their own communities.

Street Fairs were put together by carnival companies, and promoters rushed to work with the smaller communities. Nearly every town in Central Illinois held street fairs, including Arcola, Mattoon, Tuscola, and Decatur, to name a few, and would send their street fair committees and large contingencies of people to other fairs as a show of support and to

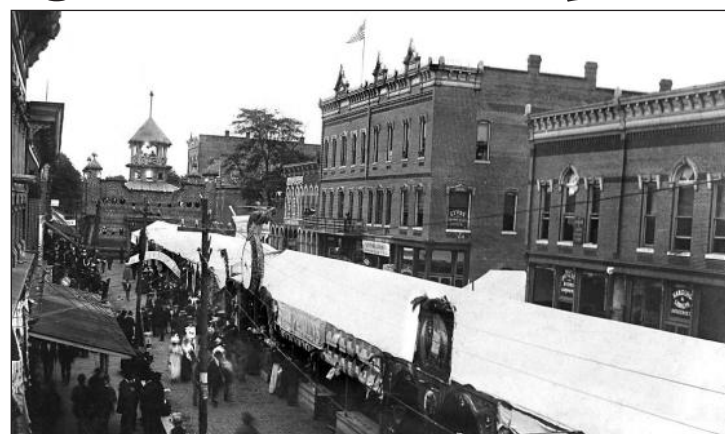


Photo of the first Arcola Broomcorn Carnival and Free Street Fair, the image shows the midway and Broomcorn Palace which was the highlight of the fair, photo Moore & Skinner of Arcola, 1898.



Interior of the Broomcorn Palace which was the highlight of the first Arcola Broomcorn Carnival and Free Street Fair, the identity of the people in the photo is unknown, photo by Moore & Skinner of Arcola, 1898.

scout out the competition.

Within a short time, the carnival street fair began to lose favor due what to what Billboard referred to as "unscrupulous charlatans who cared nothing about the future of the business" who had begun to invade the carnival business. These charlatans began taking huge salaries, the quality of the events began to suffer, and "immoral features were not kept out." Along with the deterioration of the carnival company offerings, the events began to draw nefarious character which the newspapers of the day referred to as "grafters" and "fakirs."

The March 1907 Billboard article noted that at the time of the article the popularity of street

fairs had significantly declined, but the "spark" of interest was "not entirely extinguished" and would likely be revived in a manner in which communities could maintain more control.

Arcola hosted three "Free Street Fairs" in its time, one in 1898, one in 1903, and one in 1905.

An article about the Arcola Street Fair in the Decatur Daily Review on June 14, 1905, just after the Arcola fair closed, seems to indicate that the Arcola events may have fallen victim to the issues plaguing the industry as a whole. The article led with the headline, "Town Overrun with Grafters. During Street Fair," and

See FAIRS on page 4

Arcola's First Broom Corn Palace. September 28 to October 1, 1898.



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Souvenir card from the 1898 Broomcorn Carnival and Free Street Fair from Arcola's G.E. Amsbary & Company. See photo on page 3 in Down Memory Lane.

Daylily

From page 1

members' faces when they see the girls' overall excitement and the sparkle in their eyes when they have won the bid on their favorite daylily."

The Titus girls have selected to receive scholarship money toward the purchase of daylilies to begin their Daylily hybridization program. They have collected seeds and helped plant daylilies before, but now they want to learn more about the hybridizing process.

Ansley applied shortly after her return from the 2022

National American Daylily Society convention in Asheville, N.C. She will purchase a daylily from Jamie Gossard's Heavenly Gardens of Galloway, Ohio. She plans to cross her selection to her Daylily, H. Humungosaur, which was also hybridized by Gossard.

The younger Titus girl, Evelyn, chose to request scholarship money to purchase a daylily from Carmel, Ind., hybridizer, Bret Clement. Evelyn attended the CIDS meeting last spring where Clement spoke about his hybridization program. Titus was interested in the

fact that Clement names some of his daylilies with a name associated with cats.

Although Evelyn has mainly selected tetraploid daylilies to raise and Clement grows diploid daylilies, her grandmother, Pat Titus will help her pick some diploids from their garden to cross with her new selection.

The Bob Faulkner Memorial scholarship application can be located on the Region 2 Daylily page under Awards/Bob Faulkner Memorial Scholarship or <https://adsregion2.org/bob-faulkner-memorial-scholarship/>.

A simple Google forms application can be filled out online for youth 18 and under to receive money to attend regional or national conventions or to start/continue hybridization programs. Faulkner's family and friends established this scholarship in honor of the late Bob Faulkner, daylily hybridizer from Dayton, Ohio.

Faulkner scholarship chair, Barb Buikema said recently, "Congratulations Evelyn and Ansley. We are so very excited and proud to present you with a scholarship in memory of our dear friend, Mr. Bob Faulkner."