

April-June 2024

27 Years Ago
 September 1997
The Community Crier

Fair celebrated business, agriculture

The Plymouth Agricultural Fair pre-dated the Fall Festival by 70 years

In September 1997, in anticipation of the annual Plymouth Fall Festival, the Community Crier featured a story, written by reporter Daniel Webb, about the famous and historic Plymouth Fair, held from 1885-1902. The first Rotary Club chicken barbecue fundraiser, renamed the Plymouth Fall Festival in September 1960, was held on Sunday, May 20, 1956, at what became Fairground Park, located at Joy and Harding Streets, part of the long forgotten Plymouth fairground.

When the Plymouth Rotary's chicken barbeque evolved into the Fall Festival, it was hardly Plymouth's first festival.

Almost 112 years ago, the Plymouth Fair Association set out to organize an agricultural fair of a different variety.

"This association was not organized to make money, but to encourage agriculture and art and to provide a week's enjoyment for the people of Plymouth and the surrounding country," is what the flyer for the event, mailed out to patrons and friends, said.

They succeeded.

The 1885 event was a great success. Farmers and Industrialists alike displayed their goods in the fenced-in grounds that became the talk of southeast Michigan.

The fairgrounds sat on a 22-acre site south west of the Ann Arbor Trail railroad crossing, where the Fairground subdivision is today. It had exhibit halls, a race track, a baseball diamond and two entrances.

The main entrance, a high double-gate large enough for horse and buggy to pass through, was just off Ann Arbor street (now Ann Arbor Trail). A second entrance at the end of Bowery (now Maple) was built to admit livestock and was simply dubbed The Back Gate.

The grounds were a jewel of the community. A large grandstand stood

just west of a horse track where Joy and Fairground roads now meet. The 500-seat structure had a peaked roof and boxed seats in the front. The half-mile track, which held harness, trot and running races each day of the week-long fair was considered by many to be the best in the state.

In the center of the track was a large baseball diamond where teams like the Plymouth Pearls would slug it out with neighboring teams. It was also home to the local high school team until the present sight behind Central Middle school was completed in 1905.

The midway was near the Back Gate. Side-shows and magic acts thrilled young and old alike. Many Plymouth residents recalled the horror of seeing a man beheaded on the stage of one of those side shows, only to see him rise whole and well moments later.

But the late Clara Patterson Todd, a long-time Plymouth, happiest memories of the fair were of the excellent taffy made at the Midway. as she reported in a 1958 speech to the Plymouth Historical Society.

"I'm sure no other taffy will taste as good...It was white, pink, or chocolate color...I never tired of watching them pull it from the long, iron hooks driving in the center post."

127 Years Ago
 September 1897

Hold On There!

If you are going to visit the Plymouth Fair, don't forget to call at the **Hotel Plymouth** and get a good meal. We expect and know that we will have a large patronage. That is why we are going to be prepared.

Attendance to the fair was aided by the arrival of the streetcar in 1899. The Dearborn to Northville track ran past the fair, and stopped at the main gate. Plymouth was a witness to a flurry of activity at that time. The village was becoming known as the air-guh capital of the world. Electricity, telephones, and running water arrived. Plymouth was growing into an important township, and the fair grew with it.

Then on a cold winter day in 1902, tragedy struck. Floral hall burned to the ground in a fire that was to spell the eventual doom of the fair.

The fair continued for another year, but poor weather and property disputes conspired to close it in 1903. With that, the highly successful and popular fair faded into Plymouth's history.

The fence was removed around 1907, and though the baseball field still found use, the track would never hold another horse race, and became a place where many locals first learned to ride a bicycle.

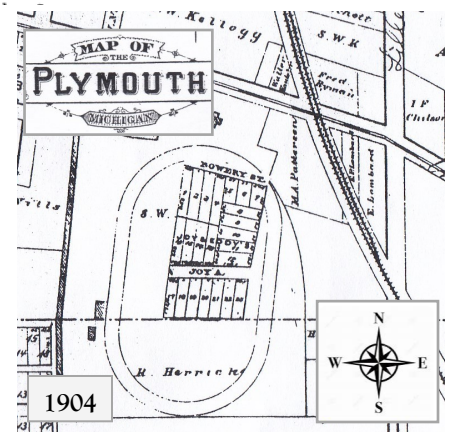
Shortly after World War II all that remained of the fairground were the streets named Fair and Fairground.



Main entrance to the Plymouth fairground, off Ann Arbor Trail. Photo circa 1890s.

The Plymouth Fair Association was formed in 1885 and operated the Plymouth Fair 1885-1902. The fairground was surrounded by a high-board fence. In 1901 (not 1902 as reported in the article here), the main gathering hall on the fairground was destroyed by fire. The building wasn't replaced, and the fairground closed in 1902 (not 1903 as reported in the article here).

The legendary Plymouth fairground was located near the southwest corner of Ann Arbor Trail and Lilley Road, west of the railroad tracks. Today, the only references to the fairground are the city streets named Fairground and Fair, and Fairground Park.



A section of a map of Plymouth printed in 1904, that shows the former Plymouth fairground and race track. By April 1904, the property owner, Siron Kellogg, had divided some of the former fairground land into parcels and lots for sale. Home construction on the residential lots began in the late 1910s.

Plymouth Historical Museum
 155 South Main Street
 Plymouth, Michigan 48170
<http://www.plymouthhistory.org>
<http://www.facebook.com/plymouthhistory>
 734-455-8940 Fax: 734-455-7797

Hours

Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
 1-4 PM all days
 Open year round (except some holidays)

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The Museum Memo is printed four times a year.

Monthly Drawing

Pamela Stopper, Cindi Willard, and Joan Cady are the respective winners of the April, May, and June drawings for a \$25 gift certificate.

Kroger Plus Card Donations



Thank you to those who have added the Plymouth Historical Society to their **Kroger Plus Card**. The Museum receives a small percentage from any purchases made by those who have an up-to-date registration on their cards.

To participate in the program, visit www.krogercommunityrewards.com.

Click on "Michigan" and click on "Enroll."

You must have a valid online account at Kroger.com to participate. If you need help, give us a call at 734-455-8940 ext. 9. We'll be happy to help you get enrolled.

Plymouth Historical Museum Quote

One of the finest museums for its size in the country.
 —Solon Weekes, curator of the Detroit Historical Museum, 1973



**Friends of the Plymouth
 Historical Museum
 New Members—Welcome!**

Thanks for your support!

Nancy Baldwin, Plymouth
 Bill Blackerby, Canton
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 Jacqueline George, Plymouth
 Debra Madonna, Plymouth
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THANK YOU
 FOR SUPPORTING
 THE PLYMOUTH
 HISTORICAL MUSEUM



Become a Member

The Plymouth Historical Museum is a privately funded 501(c)3 charitable organization. We receive no government funding. We always have a "wish list" of things that help us as we work to preserve and share the history of Plymouth. Here are some of our common purchases to provide inspiration:

- 1 Roll Postage Stamps **\$68 per**
- IT/Network support **\$1,000**
- ½ month heating bill **\$500**
- ½ month electric bill **\$600**
- 1 month employee salary **\$800**

To donate, make your check payable to the Plymouth Historical Museum.

Bits 'n Pieces

By Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens, executive director

Victorian House Construction

Thanks to the Margaret Dunning Foundation, the project we've been working toward for about a year will soon become a reality! The Dunning Foundation granted the Plymouth Historical Society \$90,000 toward the construction of a Victorian-era home in place of the current Victorian room exhibits in the Museum.

The renovation entails enclosing the area and making it look like a Victorian home, where visitors will be able to walk through and experience life in about 1915, when transportation modes were transitioning from horse and buggy to automobile. In addition, the second story will create new collections storage space which is sorely needed at the Museum.

The Museum will be closed July 1 through October 1. Construction begins July 15, with Stella Contracting as the lead contractor on the project. Jeff Stella's crew was responsible for rebuilding the Museum's train depot last year, to much acclaim. In addition, Mark Salloum and his crew at Highway Media will once again prepare incomparable animated video to entertain visitors interested in life in Plymouth in 1915.

In addition to the major grant

received from the Dunning Foundation, the Museum has received several smaller grants and more than \$80,000 in donations from members and the community. We are so grateful for the support and are looking forward to unveiling our newest exhibit space when

we reopen in October.

We are still taking donations. Those who donate a minimum of \$100 will be included on the donor plaque that will be part of the new exhibit space. Thank you for your generosity!



Time Escape Adventure

The Plymouth Historical Museum's new Time Escape Adventure debuted on Friday, June 7, 2024. The group of hardy souls above took the challenge, escaped the dreaded fate of being incinerated, and were successfully returned to the 21st century. The adventure more than five years in the making is a combination escape room and scavenger hunt. Groups enter a time portal to the 19th century where they are tasked with locating a time machine to escape before they are vaporized. All of your sleuthing skills are needed to return to the present.

We would like to thank Mike Woloszyk, the Museum's operations director, for visualizing our "escape room" and bringing it to life with the help of our intrepid maintenance crew.

Tickets are \$30 per person; groups must be between 4 and 8 people. We started with a limited run in June; the Time Escape Adventure will return in full force in October, when the Museum reopens. At that time we will offer two times on Friday nights: 6 and 7:30 PM. Check the Museum's website plymouthhistory.org/events for tickets and availability. Here's your chance to time travel!



GIFT SHOP

Visit the Museum Store!

The store features an assortment of gifts and books pertaining to Plymouth's history. Museum admission is not required to visit the store. Museum Hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, & Sunday, 1-4 pm. 155 S. Main Street, Plymouth, 734-455-8940.

Ticket Sale Dates for Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Members	Public
June 29	The Mysterious Affair at Stirling Hall Murder Mystery		Now
Sep 29	Spooky Tea	July 29	August 12
Oct 1	Members-only Preview "First Ladies, Fashion Setters"	August 19	
Oct 4	Time Escape Adventure	August 12	August 26
Oct 12	Plymouth Ghosts Cemetery Walk	August 12	August 26

Donations Received
March – May 2024 Thank You!

Thank you for the following generous donations that were received between March and May 2024:

The Lincoln (\$1,000-\$2,499)

Marlene Donoghue
Robert Gotro
Jan Paton

The Starkweather (\$500-\$999)

Grant Easton
William Lawton
Alan Schnitzer

The Penniman (\$250-\$499)

Jim Burroughs
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The Kellogg (\$100-\$249)

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Greko Printing

Family Fun (\$300)

Kilwins of Plymouth
RE/Max Classic Plymouth

Victorian Rooms Upgrade

The Dunning (\$2,500 +)

Elizabeth Kerstens
Plymouth Rotary Foundation

The Lincoln

(\$1,000-\$2,499)

Richard Kaylor
Kirk, Vickey & Kasey Kohn

The Kellogg (\$100-\$250)

Janet Burns
Kathy Sullivan
Adam & Regina Szymczak
Cindi Willard

Rent a Room Here for Your Next Function



The Plymouth Historical Museum is the ideal setting for weddings, showers, receptions, corporate functions, club meetings, funeral luncheons, and many other events.

Our Sanford Burr Meeting Room can comfortably seat up to about 100 people, depending on configuration. Prices are reasonable, and for an additional fee, can include rental of

the kitchen and/or a private tour of the Museum. Wireless Internet access is available throughout the Museum. Call 734-455-8940 for more information.

The Plymouth Fair

1800s festival honoring agriculture
drew thousands

By Elizabeth Kerstens
and Ellen Elliott



Plymouth school kids in the late 1800s would be let out of school early in order to attend the Plymouth

In 1800s rural America, communities came together to celebrate their agricultural successes. Plymouth had plenty to be proud of. The Plymouth Fair Association was formed in May 1885 to create an annual fair encompassing exhibitions, races and prizes for livestock, fruits, vegetables, and textiles.

Twenty acres of land just east of the village was leased from Siron Kellogg for 10 years, with the possibility of another 10 years after that. The grounds were readied for the first Plymouth Fair held September 28-October 1, 1885, which drew thousands of people each day.

Theodore Sherwood was elected president of the fair association when it formed and remained president until it dissolved. Sherwood was a natural choice as president given his keen interest in choice livestock. He even won a famous, ground-breaking lawsuit against Hiram Walker for his cow, Rose of Aberlone.

On the fair property, the octagonal building, Floral Hall, housed vendor displays, had a variety of entertainment and showcased needle work and fine arts. There were two dining pavilions staffed by local church women, a band stand, a poultry tent, a grandstand for watching the races on the racetrack, and a stable.

The horse races were favorites with fairgoers from miles around with prize purses increasing each year. As its popularity grew, people found it increasingly difficult to use public transportation options such as the interurban trolley. In 1900, a group of 42 people from the neighboring town of Newburg were bypassed by the full trolley twice, forcing the group to walk to the fair.

A couple of the popular attractions were the hot-air balloons and parachute drops.

"The balloon ascensions were more spectacular than successful," remembered Clara Patterson Todd, who grew up next door to the fairgrounds.

She also recalled the "Midway" area, where there were sideshows, taffy stands, shooting galleries and tents for trying your skill at various games.

The fair was still going strong in 1901, after Plymouth farmers recommitted to supporting the annual event. But on the morning of November 25 that year, Floral Hall burned to the ground in less than 20 minutes. The fair was held in 1902



for the last time, and Floral Hall was never replaced.

In September 1903 landowner Siron Kellogg sued the Plymouth Fair Association for trespass, forcing the association to liquidate its physical property located on the fairgrounds. By April 1904, Kellogg had divided some of the property into parcels and lots for sale. Today's Fairground Park at Joy and Harding streets is what remains of the old

fairground. It was at this park that the Rotary Club of Plymouth held its first chicken barbeque in 1956.



*A Slice of History,
courtesy of Plymouth Today magazine,
issue Second Quarter 2024*



Fairground Street

Behind most of the street names in Plymouth there is a history usually known to only a few residents of the city. The street which is now Fairground Street was a farm around the year 1880. It was near this location that the Plymouth fairground was later established in 1885. After the fairground closed in 1902, the land was reclaimed by the original owner, Siron Kellogg, who subdivided it into residential lots. The dirt roads and horse-drawn carriages have long since given way to modern paved streets and automobiles. But, after 122 years there is still a street named Fairground, in memory of a special time in Plymouth's history when thousands of people from miles around attended one of the best known community fairs in the state: the Plymouth Fair!

Please note as you read these articles that the dates are not always correct. The actual dates were 1885-1902.



101 Years Ago April 1923 *Plymouth Mail*

**AVOID SPECULATION
INVEST IN LAND!
20% DOWN - \$5 A MONTH
FAIRGROUND SUB.**

EVERY LOT is priced below present actual value.
A short time will see a marked increase in the prices of this property.

EVERY LOT is restricted.
There will be no shacks permitted.

EVERY LOT is level.
There will be no filling or grading necessary.

EVERY LOT is high and dry.
There will be no water standing in any basement.

EVERY LOT is within two minutes' walk of the car line.

EVERY LOT can have ELECTRIC LIGHTS,
CITY WATER, etc.

A WAYNE COUNTY ABSTRACT furnished with each deed.

**Fortunes will be made in Plymouth Realty
in the next five years**

Already Detroit investors are beginning to buy up our property.

WHY?

BECAUSE they can see what is in store for Plymouth in the near future.

Are you going to sit by and let outside parties snap up all the bargains?

There are only a few of these lots, some of them have been sold already, so don't wait until next week to buy. Many a fortune has been lost through procrastination.

123 Years Ago November 1901 *Plymouth Mail*

Another Serious Fire on the Fair Grounds

The fire fiend visited Plymouth for the second time Monday morning about nine o'clock. Fred Dunn and others were engaged turning a car on the turntable at the power-house, when smoke was seen by them issuing from the roof of the floral hall on the fair grounds. Information was at once telephoned down town and the alarm sounded by the blowing of whistles at the power-house and the Hamilton factory. The fire department responded in a few minutes, and two streams of water soon played on the flames. The hook and ladder boys also did good service. The fire, however, had gained such headway, that the building was in ashes in less than twenty minutes. How the fire originated can only be conjectured, but is supposed to have been the work of tramps who may have found a night's lodging there, built a fire and left it carelessly. The hall was probably valued at \$1,000, on which there was no insurance. President Sherwood, of the fair association, says that the burning of the floral hall will not necessarily prevent another fair being given next fall. A meeting of the directors will be held in a few days to consider possibilities and probabilities.

121 Years Ago April 1903 *Plymouth Mail*

**ATTEND THE
Chattel Mortgage Sale
BUILDINGS, STALLS, FENCES,**

Plymouth Fair Association Grounds,

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2 P.M.

TERMS, - - - CASH.

121 Years Ago September 1903 *Plymouth Mail*

Siron Kellogg has begun an action against the Plymouth Fair Association for trespass. Hearing Sept. 9th.

58 Years Ago July 1966
Plymouth Mail

House by old fairgrounds



A house built in the 1880's is the pride and joy of a young couple in Plymouth.

The David Danes, originally from Southfield looked for an old house for two years before they found this one on the corner of Maple St. and Hamilton.

When the Dane's house was built Maple St., or Bowery St., as it was known then, dead-ended right after the house and the Plymouth Fair was right next to it.

The Plymouth Fair Association held a fair every summer from the mid- 1880's until 1904. This is where Fairground and Fair St. get their names.

The Fair was the high point in the life of a youngster in Plymouth in those days. There was horse racing, ball games, a merry-go-round, a ferris wheel, side shows. And of course farmers and their wives won prizes for their produce and cooking.

The Danes have found relics of the old fair in their yard, once in their digging they even found an old horse shoe.

Volunteer Spotlight

Chris Kelly



The Plymouth Historical Museum is fortunate to have a very dedicated and knowledgeable staff of volunteer guides, and Chris Kelly is certainly one of them

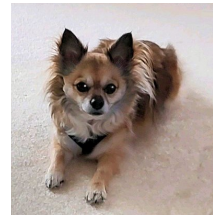
Chris got involved with the Museum through his membership with the Kiwanis Club, which meets at the Museum on a weekly basis. After a casual conversation with Liz Kerstens, out Museum executive director who is also a Kiwanis member, Chris started at the Museum almost a year ago as a guide.

Chris is originally from the Toledo area, attending high school in Erie, Michigan, and starting college at Monroe Community College. Chris was awarded a scholarship to the University of Toledo and graduated with a degree in vocal performance. After grad school at Bowling Green State University, Chris began his career singing in operas. He spent one year at the Michigan Opera Theater then moved east to Princeton, New Jersey, after a brief tour in Germany. After 10 years on the opera stage, Chris decided to take a 180-degree turn and began a new career in trust finance. This led to a vice president position with Merrill Lynch, work at PNC Bank in Ann Arbor, and doing charitable fundraising for Schoolcraft Community College.

Since joining the Museum, Chris has been very active aside from being a regular guide. He has participated in the Museum's cemetery walk, the ghost walk and murder mysteries.

Besides his love for classical music, Chris bides his time with his adopted pet "Zukey," a long-haired Chihuahua.

If you bump into Chris in the Museum, don't be too shy to ask him to sing a few bars from "The Marriage of Figaro."



—Written by Mike Woloszyk, Museum marketing director

Thank You Volunteers! Volunteers Make a Difference!

Penniman-Allen Theatre Plymouth, Michigan



The Plymouth fairground's namesake, Fairground Park, is located in the city of Plymouth at the corner of Joy Street and Harding Street, just west of where the historic Plymouth fairground once stood from 1885 to 1902. Today, the only references to the fairground are the city streets named Fairground and Fair, and Fairground Park.



79 Years Ago 1945



74 Years Ago 1950

Plymouth Days Gone By

Compiled by Gerry Sabatini from the newspaper archives
at the Plymouth District Library

OUR TIME, OUR HISTORY.

PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN

One of Plymouth's Great Fairs
Started 48 Years Ago Sept. 28

90 Years Ago
October 1934
Plymouth Mail

Harry Robinson Has In His Possession One Of The
Original Premium Lists Of Fair Held
Here In Fall of 1886

In 1934, Plymouth businessman and former village president Harry Robinson proudly announced his discovery of an original 1886 Plymouth Fair Premium Program, listing events and sponsors for the second year of the popular Plymouth Fair. The Plymouth Fair was held 1885-1902 at the legendary Plymouth fairground, located southwest of Ann Arbor Trail and Lilley Road. The treasured 1886 program book was considered the only copy still in existence from the 18 years of publication. The Plymouth fairground closed in 1902.

Harry C. Robinson (1863-1948), was a longtime resident of Plymouth and one of the area's best known citizen.



T. C. Sherwood was president of the association, L. C. Hough was treasurer, J. M. Collier was secretary, S. J. Springer was chief marshall, O. R. Pettingill was vice president and W. O. Allen assistant secretary.

The horse races were referred to in the premium book as "exhibition of speed in horses."

Managers of the "exhibition of speed" were Byron Poole and L. H. Bennett.

There was no division of trotting and pacing races but on the final day there was a running race.

The horse exhibit was divided into five different classes. First came the thoroughbreds, then the draft horses, carriage horses, roadsters and finally horses for all classes of work. This division gives some idea as to the importance of the horse as a domestic animal some 50 years ago. Its services were divided up just about in the same way that automobiles are today.

The fair book is filled with advertising from Plymouth and Detroit merchants.

Besides all of these advertisements—and Plymouth business men were as good advertisers in those days as now, there was published the premium list which showed that the old fair association was liberal in its cash awards.

Mr. Robinson highly prizes the old Plymouth Fair Premium List book, as far as known the only one in existence.

"Come to Plymouth to the great fair—September 28, 29, 30 and October 1."

No, not this year—but 48 years ago—the above words covered the handbills that advertised the second annual Plymouth fair.

Forty-eight long years ago L. C. Hough, L. H. Bennett, T. C. Sherwood, W. O. Allen, C. D. Durfee, O. R. Pettingill, J. M. Collier, S. J. Springer, J. W. Taft, and Byron Poole, all pioneers of this community were active trying to do something for the good of their community.

They organized the Plymouth Fair Association which flourished for a number of years, and at times brought great crowds to Plymouth from all the surrounding country.

There has just come into the possession of Harry Robinson, one of the Premium books of the fair that started in Plymouth 48 years ago last Friday. The first fair was held in 1885. The premium book was printed in the Wayne Review office, which was then the home of the old Plymouth Review, published by the founder of the Plymouth Mail.

PLYMOUTH FAIR PROGRAM.

The fifteenth annual exhibition of the Plymouth Fair Association, will open next Tuesday, Sept. 19th, and continue four days. Following is the week's program:

TUESDAY.

Recording of entries.
Arrangement of exhibits, etc.

WEDNESDAY.

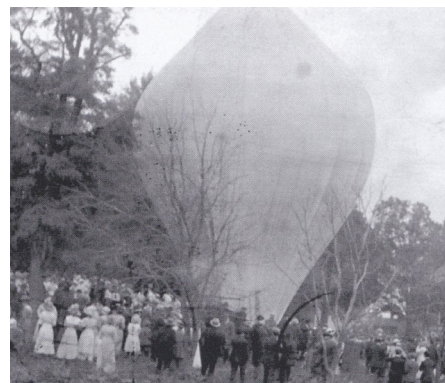
Band concert by Brighton band.
School children's parade.
Ball game—Wayne vs. The Avenues.
Band concert.
Farmers' trotting race.
Chinese performers.
Farmers' pacing race.
Farmers' running race.
Chinese performers.
Band concert.

THURSDAY.

Band concert by Plymouth band.
Ball game—Carleton vs. Cherry Hill.
Chinese troupe.
2:40 trot.
Band concert.
2:28 pace.
Colt race.
Chinese troupe.
Band concert.

FRIDAY.

Band concert, Plymouth band.
Parade of stock.
Ball game between the two winners of previous games.
Band concert.
Chinese troupe.
Free-for-all pace.
Free-for-all trot.
Band concert.
Chinese troupe.
One mile running race.



Hot air balloon rides were a popular attraction at the Plymouth Fair. The fair was held annually from 1885 to 1902. One year, the balloon failed to inflate. After several attempts, the balloon, without passengers, suddenly shot a few feet into the sky, flew over a fence, and crashed into a farm yard next to the fairground.

130 Years Ago August 1894
Plymouth Mail

WILL BE THE BEST.

PROSPECTS OF A BIG FAIR
INCREASING.

The Northville Band Secured for
the Fair - Good Premiums
Offered

130 Years Ago August 1894
Plymouth Mail

SURPASSED!

Plymouth Fair Beyond
Expectations.

“Nearly 8,000 People!”

With to-day's (Friday) exhibition and races the tenth annual fair will close decked with honors honestly won.

From Monday morning till the closing day crowds have been on the move all the time. Wednesday was children's day. About ten o'clock the band led off for the grounds and was followed by over 1,000 children. It was a gala day and was immensely enjoyed by all.

Thursday opened out with the crowds coming from all directions from early morn. There was nearly 8,000 people on the grounds.

The horse racing was all that could be asked for. The managers succeeded in looking a number of the favorites of the turf, and some hot and exciting heats were raced. The running races were probably the most exciting. A lad about 10 or 12 years old carrying off the honors and the hearts of the crowd. Especially was this so in the last heat of the race Thursday. The Judge said go and his horse was almost at a stand still, but away he went about 25 yards behind. He made a steady gain all the time. Down the stretch he came at a terrific speed and went under the wire over a length ahead in the good time of .51.

OUR TIME, OUR HISTORY.

PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN

Newspaper Headlines
Promoting the Plymouth Fair

128 Years Ago July 1896

THE BEST OF ALL.

THAT IS WHAT THE FAIR OF 1896
WILL BE MADE.

Good Purse for Speed Trials—Wholesale Specialties and Many New Features.

The coming Fair will be the twelfth held under the auspices of the Plymouth Fair Association.

Since its inception in 1885, when organized with a capital stock of \$1300, over \$5000 have been expended upon the buildings and grounds. From a beginning that was almost wholly local, it now numbers its exhibitors and visitors from all the surrounding counties, and has attained the proud distinction of being the largest fair in southeastern Michigan. The Association has been re-organized this year, the capital stock increased, the directorship enlarged, new life infused, and every effort will be made to have the fair for 1896 outshine all its predecessors.

136 Years Ago September 1888

THE PLYMOUTH FAIR.

IT KEEPS UP ITS RECORD OF BEING
BETTER THAN THE PRECEDING ONES.

A Large Attendance and Fine Display.

The fair opened Tuesday with about the usual attendance for the first day. The weather was fair and everybody hoped for the same during the succeeding days. Wednesday morning the sky looked threatening and a little after noon a rain set in which lasted during the day. The grounds showed the usual number of peanut and candy stands, shooting gallery, photographic car and other devices for catching the stray nickels.

127 Years Ago September 1897
Plymouth Mail

NEXT WEEK!

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE PLYMOUTH
FAIR

Next Tuesday morning the gates at the entrances of the Plymouth fair grounds will be open for the thirteenth annual meeting of the Plymouth Fair Association. During the past 13 years much hard work has been done and much money expended to bring this fair up to its present high standard. It is generally spoken of as the best and most thrifty fair in the state. This year it is fair to exceed all former exhibitions in exhibits and a much better program of amusements has been arranged than ever before.

137 Years Ago September 1887

THE FAIR.

Grand Display Throughout and a Very
Large Attendance.

121 Years Ago August 1903

PLYMOUTH FAIR GROUNDS

MONDAY, AUG. 12

Gentry Bros.

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Trained Animal Exhibition

Presenting Many New High Class Features.

200 Performing horses,
dogs and monkeys,
50 Dogs and Monkeys.
Monkey Comedians

2 Herds of
Performing
Elephants.

Positively greatest show of its kind in the world

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REMEMBER THE PLYMOUTH FAIR DATES--SEPTEMBER 17, 18, 19 AND 20, 1895.

129 Years Ago
September
1895

The Plymouth Mail.

\$10.00
FOR MONTHLY
FAIR, DETROIT
AND RETURN
EVERY DAY.

70 Years Ago
May 1954
Plymouth Mail

OUR TIME, OUR HISTORY.
PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN

Old Plymouth Fair Drew Crowds for Miles at Turn of the Century

About all that's left of the old Plymouth Fairgrounds is the Fairground subdivision, Fairground street and a lot of happy memories. For long-time Plymouth residents the Plymouth fairs are remembered as the year's most exciting event and people came from miles around to attend. Perhaps the most vivid memories of the fairs are those of Mrs. Clara Patterson Todd of 207 West Ann Arbor trail, who lived right next door to the old fairgrounds.

All of the property now called the Fairground subdivision was then part of the fairgrounds. The grounds had a high board fence, Mrs. Todd recalled, and there were two entrances to the grounds, one on what is now Ann Arbor trail and one directly in line with what is now Maple avenue. The front entrance, on Ann Arbor trail, had high double gates for the horses and buggies, while the rear one was for the cattle and the entrance for the horses brought in for the races.

"The race track was a half-mile one and was considered one of the very best in the state," Mrs. Todd said. Within the track there was a baseball diamond and the parking area for people to hitch their buggies, from which they could watch the races.

"The grandstand was built on the west side of the track, just about where Joy and Fairground streets meet," she recalled. It accommodated about 500 persons, had a roof over it and box seats along the front. The judges' stand was directly across the track. The band took their places there also so it could play for both the races and ball games.

Along the fence on the sidewalk side were the two eating halls, Mrs. Todd said, one run by the Methodists and the other by the Baptists. Another building held a display of buggies, surreys and farming implements. And of course there were the choice entries of poultry, rabbits and white mice.

Admission tickets were \$1 for the family, 25 cents for single admissions and 15 cents for children under 12. Prizes in the various categories ranged from \$1 to 25 cents.

It was the horse races, however, that brought in the money, she told. Purses ranged from \$200 for the big money, down to about \$50 for the lowest purse. Bicycles were coming into vogue then, so on the last two days of the fair there was a five-mile dash.

The Floral Hall, a large octagon shaped building with four wings, was the wonder of the grounds.

In the center there was a platform to exhibit pianos and organs with someone to play them. Needlework, preserves, farm products and baked goods were all exhibited there, and were awarded their prize ribbons.

The Floral Hall burned down in about 1902, and for the fairs that was the beginning of the end. They erected a large tent to replace it in 1903, but rainy weather made a veritable mud-hole of the grounds. By the end of the week everyone knew they had seen the last Plymouth fair.

These memories and many more were presented by Mrs. Todd in a paper read before the Plymouth Historical society. The mere fact that her recollections are so vivid alone indicates that perhaps these fairs were Plymouth's biggest event back at the turn of the century.

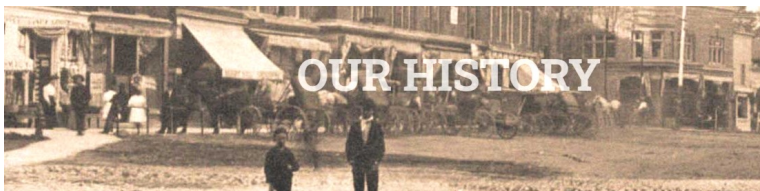
Agricultural fair dazzled young and old

The Plymouth Fair was organized by the Plymouth Fair Association, and held every late summer or early fall from 1885 to 1902. The fair was the high point in the life of a youngster in Plymouth. In addition to numerous activities for children, there were horse races, baseball games, bicycle races, and prizes for best livestock and baked goods. There was also a merry-go-round, a ferris wheel, a midway with side shows, band music, dancing, and a shooting gallery. Everyone had a chance to participate in the fair. Children from neighboring one-room schoolhouses traveled with their parents by horse and wagons to attend the fair. Women from the area churches would cook and serve evening supper during the four-day event.

127 Years Ago 1897
Plymouth Mail

Plymouth Fair Tickets Given Away.

- Pay \$1 for PLYMOUTH MAIL one year and get 25 cent Fair Ticket.
- Pay \$1 for Michigan Farmer one year and get 25 cent Fair Ticket.
- Pay \$1. for Twice-a-week Free Press one year and get 25 cent Fair Ticket.
- The above three papers and a 25 cent Fair Ticket for the unheard-of price of \$2.30. Offer good until Sept. 17, 1897, only.
- Daily and Sunday Tribune one month with Fair Ticket 60 cents.
- Daily Tribune one month with Fair Ticket 45 cents.
- Michigan Farmer balance of 1897 for 23 cents to new subscribers.
- PLYMOUTH MAIL until January 1, 1898, for 25 cents to new subscribers.



Plymouth 100 years ago fun at fairgrounds



*Plymouth Historian
and Author,
Sam Hudson
1911-1988*

In April 1886, the same year Phil Markham began his air rifle business in Plymouth, a group of businessmen formed a stock company known as the Plymouth Fair Association. For the next 17 years, the chief attraction in the community every September was the Plymouth Fair.

Among the prime movers in the Fair Association were local banker T.C. Sherwood, Plymouth Iron Windmill general manager L.C. Hough, and Dr. J.M. Collier.

Sherwood, who later became Michigan's first banking commissioner, was the association's president. Hough was its treasurer and Collier its secretary.

The 22-acre fairground, located southwest of Ann Arbor Trail where it crossed the railroad, was bounded on the north by Ann Arbor Trail and on the west by Depot (Hamilton) Street.

The fair was enclosed by a high board fence whose main entrance was on Ann Arbor Trail. A secondary entrance, where livestock and race horses entered, was at the dead end of Bowery (now Maple) Street.

Single tickets to the fair sold for 25 cents. Children were admitted for 15 cents. An entire family could buy a ticket for \$1. One day was set aside for children; on that day all under 15 were admitted free. School children from one-room schoolhouses as far away as Dearborn came to Plymouth by the wagonload.

There was a merry-go-round operated by horse-power. A single horse, harnessed between the outer circle and the organ in the center, hauled the device around and around as young cowboys and cowgirls rode the horse's wooden counterparts.

There also was a ferris wheel — run by manpower. Two burly men pushed the baskets of kids skyward until the scheduled number of revolutions had been completed. It was no job for a weakling.

Sideshowes, shooting galleries, balloon sellers and taffy purveyors lined the midway. Games of chance were part of the carnival atmosphere, including a shell game carried on without any sign of official interference. There was a launching pad for the balloon ascension, and a baseball diamond where the Plymouth Pearls played most of their home games.

A RACE TRACK with grandstand was located about where Joy and Fairground streets now meet. The stands accommodated about 500 spectators.

The race track was said to be one of the best in this part of the state. Races included trotting, pacing and the half-mile running race. Purses ranged from \$50 to \$200. Many local businessmen owned horses which they entered in the races.

During the last two days of the annual fair, bicycle races were featured at the track. There was no entry fee. Prizes were awarded to those who placed first and second.

The fair was open only four days — Tuesday through Friday — every September. The grounds were closed at 6 p.m. Electric lights did not come to Plymouth until 1902 when the fair had about run its course.

FLORAL HALL, a wooden building with four wings radiating from a central octagonal core, was the most imposing structure on the grounds.

A "REST" TENT at the fair was staffed by members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, whose local branch had more than 100 members.

The tent was a popular place with mothers; it was equipped with rockers, chairs, a couch, cribs for infants and a variety of home remedies. Periodic attempts to sell liquor at the fair were beaten back by a coalition of the WCTU, the Fair Association, and the Village Council.

The fair came to an end in 1903. In the preceding year, Floral Hall was destroyed by fire. In 1903, rain fell during most of Fair Week. The grounds were covered with mud and attendance was poor. The fair was not opened the following year.

The property became a real estate development known as the Fairground Subdivision. The baseball field was used until 1905. The wooden fence which enclosed the fairgrounds came down about 1907.

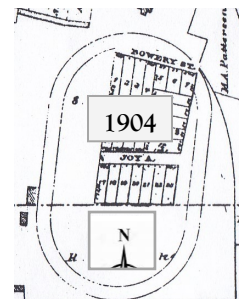
Still existing to remind one of the simpler pleasures of days gone by are Fairground Street, which runs south off Ann Arbor Trail, and Fair Street which runs west off Mill Street.

THE FAIR WAS designed to encourage agriculture and art and to provide a week's enjoyment for the people of Plymouth and the surrounding area. It was a forerunner of today's Plymouth Fall Festival but heavily oriented toward agricultural events and exhibits.



Treasured Remnants of the Plymouth Fairground Race Track 1885-1902 — Unearthed Horseshoes

The old Plymouth fairground, 1885-1902, featured a half-mile oval horse race track. The race track was deemed to be one of the finest in the state, and included a grandstand for spectators. A number of local businessmen and farmers entered their horses in the annual fairground race. In 1891, the favored horses were named Tornado, Blizzard, and Sunshine. After the fairground closed in 1902, the property was developed into a residential neighborhood, named Fairground Subdivision. Folklore tales persisted for several years of homeowners uncovering rusty horseshoes as they landscaped their property. Many new city residents, who had no knowledge of the former fairground, were perplexed as to the origin of the buried horseshoes.



Friends of the Plymouth Historical Museum
155 S. Main Street
Plymouth, MI 48170

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Return Service Requested

Calendar of Events

Events are at the Museum unless otherwise specified. Tickets can be found at <http://plymouthhistory.org/events/>.

June

29 **The Mysterious Affair at Stirling Hall Murder Mystery**, 6-9 PM. \$30. Sponsored by C. L. Finlan.

30 Last day, “**Rotary Club of Plymouth: A Century of Service.**”

July: Museum Closed

August: Museum Closed

16-17 **Nostalgia Sale** 9 AM-4 PM. Museum’s meeting room.

September: Museum Closed

29 **Spooky Tea**, Noon-2 PM. Tickets on sale to members July 29; on sale to the public August 12. Sponsored by Plymouth-Canton Civitan Club.

October

1 **Members-only Preview**, 6-8 PM. Tickets available to members August 19.

2 “**First Ladies, Fashion Setters**” special exhibit opens.