

East Enterprise Fair

The following stories were written by Raleigh E. Whitham who titled these remembrances *History of the Switzerland County Fair, East Enterprise, Indiana 1904 to 1917*.

“My grandmother (Harriet Richmond) lived in East Enterprise and ran the Midway Hotel where dinner was 25 cents. The restaurant and hotel were very busy during the fair.

The fair was on about 70 acres of ground with lots of big trees. On the east side a board fence about eight feet stood. There was a gate here for admission and there were two gates on the south side. The admission price was 25 cents, no tax. The fairgrounds woods were so full of wagons and buggies you couldn't walk through.

There were five wells on the fairgrounds. Two of these were owned by Mr. James Oaks and Mr. Perry Lockwood. They would put a rope and bucket down the well to draw water. They would then put the water in a wooden trough which had twelve tin cups tied to it. Everyone would drink out of these cups. That was the good ole days. But, you should have seen the flies. The fair managers did not seem to know anything about the Health Department or the Sanitary Department, for they never had the water tested and I have seen them pulling dead rabbits out of the well.

One year at the fair a man had a lemonade stand. He, of course, got his water out of the wells. His lemonade wasn't selling so he put coal oil in the wells so it would. He sold it!

There was a place to eat hamburgers for 5 cents and you could get a bottle of pop for 5 cents too.

One year a man passed out counterfeit silver dollars. Another year the Delco Light Company of Anderson, Indiana installed the first electric lights on the fairground.

The big amphitheater was in front of the race track and was about 400 feet long and could seat 1,200 people. The race track was ½ mile long. Across the track was a small building where they started the race. They did this by stringing a wire across the track and when the horses came under it they rang a bell and the race was on. One of the horses I can remember was named Frank L. and another was Blackbird. Before the race, the officers of the day rode around the track. They were Mr. Sam Good and Mr. Marble.

In the Exhibits Building Miss Lockwood had a display of sewing, weaving, and quilting. She also had hats and what have you. Some of the other ladies had a display of cakes, pies, canned pickles, preserves and other home baking goods.

There was an exhibit of farm wagons and buggies, corn planters and cultivators, whips and harnesses. The wagons were from the Studebaker Company of South Bend, Indiana. One was on sale for \$60.00. The buggy on display was standard built by Standard Vehicle Company of Lawrenceburg, Indiana. It was on sale for \$45.00. Another buggy on display was built by Brewsters Buggy Company of New York City.

We went to a side show where I saw a man eat a snake. The only time I ever saw this.

One man at a side show ran a three shell game. He bet you one dollar that you couldn't guess the shell with the black ball in it. Every time -- good by \$1.00.

The merry-go-round at that time only cost 5 cents.

One year they dug a hole big enough for a coffin. A man was put in the coffin alive and buried.

Another year at the fair a colored man was accused of stealing something. They put him in a buggy, tied a rope around his neck and slung it over a big tree limb. The men were going to pull their buggy out from under him but the law stepped in and stopped it.

There is only two boys left that I knew in East Enterprise. Wilbur House who lives in Vevay, Indiana and Fred Lockwood who never left East Enterprise.”

The Switzerland County Historical Society welcomes stories and images from the past that help define our county's history. If you have something to share call 427-3560 or email swcomuseums@embarqmail.com.