

Putnam County Fair celebrates 150th anniversary

This year the Putnam County Fair will celebrate its' 150th anniversary.

The Putnam County Fair began as a two-day event in October 1855 at Gilboa in Blanchard Township.

The fair was held at Kalida in 1856 and in Columbus Grove in 1857. In 1859, it was moved to Ottawa.

In 1861, the fair board purchased two lots containing nine acres in Ottawa's Ewing Addition. This tract was the first permanent site developed for the fair and



People watching show near grandstand.

was adequate for about eight years.

This land was sold, and in June 1868, eight acres of land was purchased on the east

side of Ottawa. This was the beginning of the present-day fairgrounds.

One of the first things placed on the grounds was a race track. The oval was built in 1873. At the first fair in 1855, horses were raced on the Angling Road, known today as Road 5F. One of the features in the 1870's was a slow mule race.

Music appeared at the Putnam County Fair in 1877 when three bands were contracted to play for the event. The Belmore band, the Ottawa band, and the Columbus Grove band all appeared on the grounds and provided melodies for fairgoers.

One of the first buildings on the grounds, aside from several livestock sheds, was a fruit and floral hall which was built around 1872.



Tug-of-war held during Putnam County Fair.

The grounds were enlarged again in 1881 with the purchase of nine acres of land just east of the original site.

In 1892 the specifications for the grandstand were drawn up. A new grandstand, constructed by Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) workers was ready for the 1934 fair.

From then on the Putnam County

Fair continued to grow in programs and facilities with the addition of more acreage and much more in the way of buildings.

The present large barn that houses the 4-H and FFA sheep and goats apparently has been on the grounds since about 1925.

The dairy barn and swine barns were added in 1949 and 1950.

For many years the fair was an October fair. In the mid-1950's, due to the seeming bad weather that usually occurred at this time of year, the dates were moved to September.

In 1958, the fair board completed its new Merchants' Building. In 1959, a new pole barn was ready for the opening of the fair season.

In the mid-1960's another new building was added. The structure was the educational building, or Junior Fair Building.

The fair remained an early-fall fair for about fifteen years.

In 1965 it was advanced to July.

In 1978 a new secretary's office was built. The one replaced had been constructed from parts of the old Putnam County Court

House. The bell on the old building was placed near the new secretary's office at the main gate. The 1883 bell is rung at noon on opening day of each fair.

In 1991 the fair board added the fair parade. In 1993 a veterans' memorial was erected on the fairgrounds to commemorate their service to the nation.

A new maintenance building was added in 1999, replacing a wood building which dated prior to 1900.

(Information for article taken from *History of Ohio Fairs*)



Halker reunion at Putnam County Fair in 1948.



Ladies looking at produce exhibit.