Chapter XVI

AGRICULTURAL FAIRS IN POLK COUNTY

The desire to foster the production of high quality livestock and crops through county, regional, state and national fairs and exhibitions came to America with the immigrants from Europe and the British Isles. It must be admitted that the most enthusiastic support for our county and regional fairs, before the turn of the century and up until the advent of the automobile were men who "followed the horses". As a result the race track generally and grandstand were the central attraction around which the fair was built. The few exhibitors interested in improving the quality of our crops and livestock remained loyal to the fairs and helped most of the Fair Association to survive through the race horse depression years. Stage shows and carnival attractions today generally fill the grandstands at the county fairs and the horse and automobile races make the circuits of the Regional and State Fairs. The encouragement and awards offered junior exhibitors (4-H and F. F.A.,) has built and maintained interest in the livestock, crops and home economics department of the county and larger fairs.

The original Polk County Fair at Crookston with a race track and a few minor buildings for livestock and crops, was located where the present ball park now stands. The Fair Association was reorganized in 1913 into the Northwestern Minnesota Agricultural Association and was relocated on the southwest corner of Section 19 Crookston twp, the section on which the Northwest School and Experiment Station was situated. This Association received state support and opened its entries to the northwestern counties of the State. As a July or summer fair it competed with the Fertile and Fosston Fairs and was discontinued around 1925 and its charter was transferred to the East Polk County Fair at Fosston. The buildings and conditional deed to the property was transferred to the Red River Valley Livestock Association division of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. In the final distribution of the property, the University of Minnesota purchased the equity held by the Red River Valley Livestock Association which no longer used the land for an Agricultural Fair and the Great Northern Railway transferred the title unconditionally to the University and it is now part of the Northwest Experiment Station.

The Fair at Fosston, according to Franklin Vikan, in the Diamond Jubilee History in 1958, was the first Fair in the county to receive State support. It was organized as the "Thirteen Towns Fair Association" in 1893. The Fair continued until 1905 at which time the Fertile Fair Association took over the State County Fair aid. Some fifteen years later a Fosston Community Fair for east Polk County was organized. This Fair was financed by the community until the charter of the discontinued North-