

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XVIII

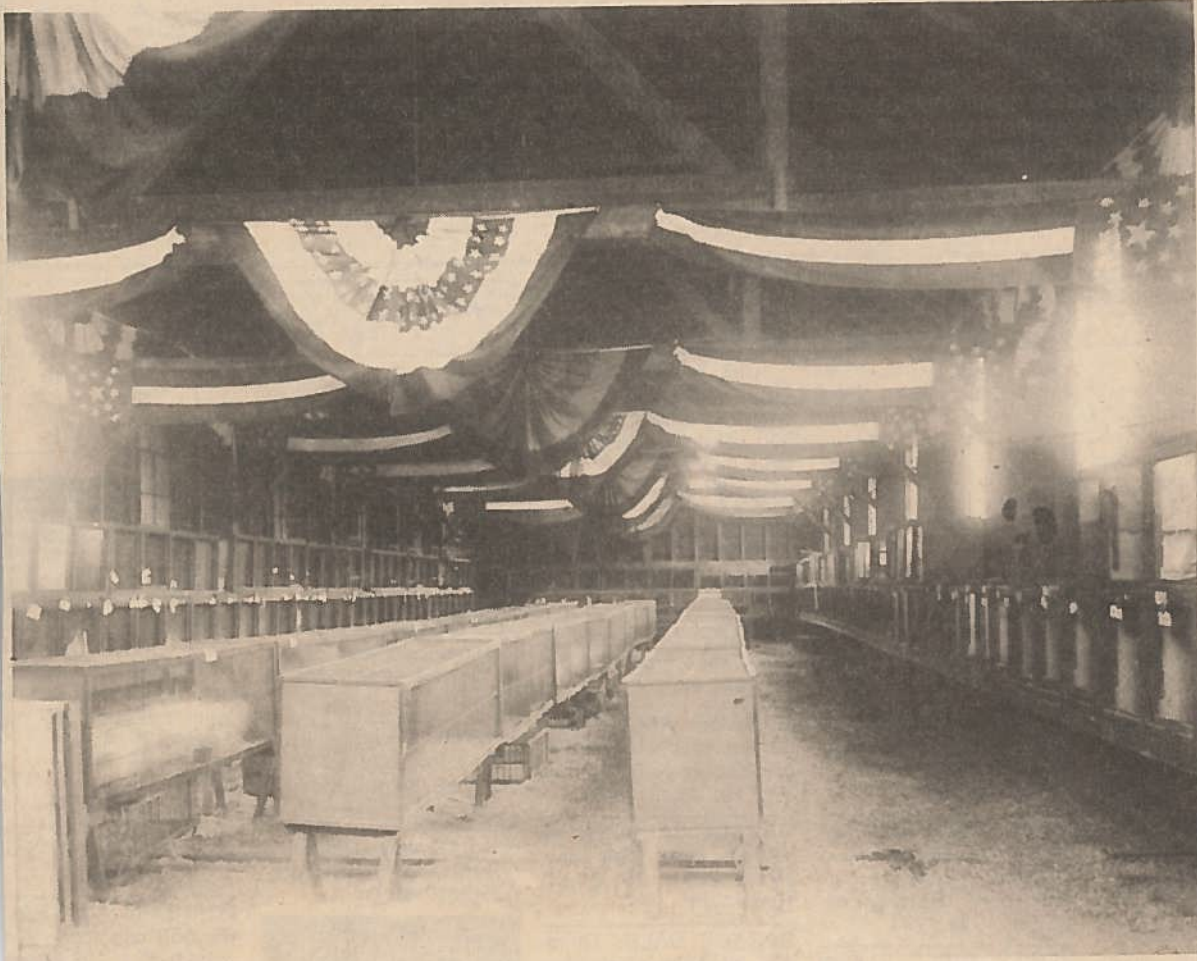
7-18-96

No. 29

4-H EXPERIENCE

By

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This year the 50th anniversary (1946-1996) of the 4H Fair will be held on July 23-27. People might think that this was the beginning of 4H in Orleans County so I thought I would tell what I remember about 4H in Orleans County before 1946. I grew up at Riches Corners. My first 4H experience was going to Don Nesbitt's farm down on the Transit Rd. in 1930. Mr. Martin the FFA Teacher at Albion High School came to talk about starting a 4H Club. I believe farm and home bureau extension work had started a little earlier and now Cornell was encouraging him to start 4H Clubs. This was great because girls could join too. We could not be in the FFA. Some people at this first meeting were the Kasts, Kirbys, Poelmas, Dragons, Snyders, my Brother, Sister and Cousin Arnold. At this meeting Garden Seeds were passed out and a talk about planning a garden was given.

This was exciting because there was one packet of Wildflowers included. These I soon planted after drawing numerous plans on paper about how my garden would look. I remember one huge flower that come up and blossomed that year. Soon after a girls club was formed called the Happy-Go Luckies. Mrs. Roy Mathes, my future Mother-in-Law was the leader. This is when I learned to sew. My first project, a pair of slacks went on for quite awhile as every time I sewed a seam it wasn't right and I had to rip it out and start over. When I finished them I wanted to show off for my Grandmother Basinait but could not go to her house unless I had a dress on. She did not approve of girls wearing pants. Hardly anyone wore them at that time. We also learned to cook some and practice our social graces like how to eat in Public.

We were able to exhibit our projects at the Orleans County Fair at the Fairgrounds on West State St. Albion. I do not believe they had separate prizes for 4-H.

In 1936 I took chickens and ducks and got a prize on a rooster. We also exhibited our sewing and baking in the Floral Hall. This place was a two story building and to a child a wonderful place. There would be training courses every year. One year I went to one on how to trap a Fox. I bought three traps from Sears and some scent and was all set to be a big hunter. I soon caught two Foxes and a neighbor skinned and put them on a board for me. I was well on my way for a Fur Coat until they got full of Moths.

The highlight of my 4H years came in 1939 when it was announced a group could go to the World's Fair in NYC. The cost would be \$18.75 and I worked very hard picking cherries for Trolleys to earn the money. Ten of us went on a train from Rochester. We stayed in a Hotel near Times Square (where I was bit by a Bed Bug). The next two days we rode out to the Fair. What a Thrill, I still remember the Parachute ride and all the futuristic displays.

Those future predictions such as TV, Space, Micro Wave ovens, etc. are what we are living with today.

4H has always meant a lot to me and I am proud to be an alumni. We always started our meetings with the Pledge so I am closing with it. "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, my health to better living, for my club, my community, and my country." Helen Basinait Mathes, Historian, Town of Barre.

In this article Helen mentions taking a prize on a rooster. Our Photo shown here depicts the interior of the poultry exhibit space as it was on the old Orleans County Fair Grounds. The blur in the cage to the far left are chickens on the move, too fast for the camera. Note the poultry crates under several of the exhibit cages. Exhibits here are obviously labeled but this 1930's photo was taken prior to awarding the prizes.