

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



VOL. III

No. 30

A FAIR TIME REMINISCENCE OR

A BUNCH OF BABIES

The purpose in a fair of course, is to exhibit the very best. If one were to take an account of all the different items exhibited at the Orleans County Fair over the last one hundred years, the list would be a mighty long one including livestock, produce, the culinary arts, floral arrangements, farm equipment, sewing and a host of commercial displays, etc. etc. That is what we have seen and would expect to see. Not a bunch of babies!

However, if we were to have attended the Fair on the right day 70 or 80 years ago we might have seen just that, a bunch of babies. Along with the pigs, pickles and pies were plump and pretty babies. From the "1912 Premium List" an annual booklet of the old Orleans County Fair we find the following advertisement.

Visit the Baby Show

THE REV. FRANCIS S. DUNHAM offers three prizes; first prize, a gold medal; 2d prize, a silver-gilt medal; 3d prize, a silver medal. EVERY CHILD brought for the contest will receive a consolation nickel medal of artistic design.

Three Finest Orleans Co. Babies

GOOD LOOKS, GOOD DISPOSITIONS, ETC., to be among the considerations. Ages two years and under. To be exhibited on

FRIDAY MORNING

Between the hours of 10 a.m. and 12 m.

Medal Given to Every Child Entered

Grandfathers and mothers excluded from the judges.

Going back just a little further we find that in 1909 the Rev. Francis S. Dunham offered \$15 to be divided into 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes respectively of \$6, \$5 and \$4 for the three finest Orleans County babies. Rev. Dunham was priest and rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Albion from 1883 until his retirement in 1910. Except for being community-spirited I have no idea why he supported the Baby Show. At any rate baby contests were once a feature at the Orleans County Fair. After all, if one is to exhibit the very best, what could be finer than a baby?

In the few weeks ahead through further publicity the Cobblestone Society will be doing a take-off on this old-fashioned idea. It will be a calendar contest for babies in which twelve babies will be featured, one each month of 1982. Photographs however, of all contestants pictured with artifacts from the Cobblestone Museum will be included.

The picture shown here by photographer R.P. Stillman is from "A Souvenir Book of the Village of Albion 1905".