

“Ponderings From the Past” September 2007

During our Jubilee Celebration year, Joan VanPatten, a member of the Communications Ministry team will dig into the archives to feature some piece of history every month in Focus.

The heads of the WSCS (Women’s Society of Christian Service) and the Methodist Men’s Club chaired the first Country Fair which was held on Saturday, October 4, 1958. Church members were looking for a fundraiser to help pay off the debt of the new church, and Martha Lane came up with the idea of a Country Fair. The first Fair was held entirely outside because the new church building was still being constructed.

In past years, workers would all dress up in old fashioned clothes, long skirts, aprons and bonnets for the ladies and straw hats and vests for the men. There was even a costume coordinator.

The early Fairs were known for the family style ham dinners that were served from 1962-1978. In the July 20, 1995 issue of the FOCUS, Hilda Watrous compiled the following information about Church Fair dinners during this time period. In 1962, over 400 were served family style. Each of six circles of the Women’s Society provided one part of the dinner menu. The circles were Celia McIntyre, Edna Allen, Faith, Dorothy Brown, Susanna Wesley and Grooms. By 1972 the Dorcas, Sarah and Ruth Circles also contributed. Each circle also provided apple, lemon and pumpkin pies. Some of the food stuffs were donated: Adam Sicko and Bill Just donated potatoes, Adam also gave squash, DeVoes gave apples. For the coleslaw, Adam and Luzerne Shafer gave cabbage, while Bill Just donated onions and peppers. Leftovers were taken to the Round Lake Nursing Home by the associate pastor, Bill Lasher. The old kitchen had no water, so paper and plastic items were used for place settings for the 416 people served. The new kitchen and new fellowship hall were expected to change the pace of serving and the time needed to serve all ticket holders. The dinner chairmen in 1978 were Mary Nelson and Ruth Day. They proposed a different kind of dinner be considered, that seatings be at 5, 6, and 7 p.m. and that ticket prices be increased to \$4.00.

June Pettis shared some of her special memories of early church Fairs with Dodie Goody. —I remember the Susanna Wesley Circle making cabbage slaw using Virginia Tracey’s cutting board, along with peeling and chopping onions. It was necessary to stir the brew and turn it over in the stone crocks for three days. We drove to Esperance to the Eastman’s Cheese House to purchase wheels of cheese, which were sliced and sold at the fair. We used an old tank filled with ice for the Take Out Deli before refrigerators became available. There was no dishwasher in the good old days so the dinner dishes were washed out back behind the church in tubs, and Charles Frier always provided the towels.

One year a National Champion demonstrated on a trampoline. There once used to be a

pattern booth, an arts booth, also one where new hats were sold, and then there was the dress shop where both new and used dresses were sold. One year there was the Gulch Pile. Now you might ask, "What is a gulch pile?" It seems that it consisted of an assortment of gadgets, tools, car parts, etc. for sale. For several years there was the Parcel Post booth run by the Junior MYF. They requested that if you traveled during the summer would you please send a 25 or 50 cent souvenir to the MYF at the Church and they would sell it at the Fair. At the 1963 Fair there was a tea at the Country Kitchen Tea Room. In 1970, the Fair featured the Jewelry Box, a magic show that cost 50 cents, a Cheese Corner and a Commission Sale where the church got 20% of the proceeds. There were also pony rides.

In 1970 when Edna and Dick Borst were chairpersons they decided that tents were needed for the outside booths to provide protection against the weather. In the late 80's there was bad weather forecasted and it was decided that a large circus type tent was needed. This worked so well that eventually two large tents were utilized.

In 1971 cotton candy was added. In 1973 the Fair had a flea market booth. In 1974 there was an ice cream parlor, movies for 35 cents and a new feature was the pound-acar booth. Attendees could take a swipe at an old car with a sledgehammer. In 1975 a new booth was added and it was called the Wood Shed. The people in charge asked for donations of scrap wood and old barn lumber and they planned to make picture frames, tie racks, bird feeders and bird houses, footstools, coffee tables, etc. There was also a booth called Silhouettes and silhouettes of children would be cut out of black and white felt. In 1977 the take out deli was started and in 1978 there was even an official Country Fair Cookbook.

In 1979 there was the Garden Patch group. People were encouraged to plant seeds in the church garden and give some of their crops to be sold at the Fair and sometimes on Sunday mornings at church in the late summer. There were individual plots for each family. Adele and Pearl Harris donated some of their farm land to be used. Dave Fifield said that he would find out how many families wanted to participate and then he would go over to the Harris' land and measure off plots. In 1980, the Fair had a church family orchestra that played on Saturday. During other years there was also a petting zoo, buttons and balloons, an international booth, record booth, car washing, a Saturday morning breakfast, egg roll booth, rag rug booth and a combination pizza and nail driving booth. Now what was that all about?

It's easy to see why some of the booths were not repeated but some of them sound as if they might be fun today.

Thanks go to *Dave Fifield, June Pettis, Dodie Goody and Edna Borst* for adding to our knowledge of church history.

Joan VanPatten