



Bill Roleau, driving for Isham Brook Farms, took top honors in the four-abreast class.

The Fabulous FRYEBURG FAIR

text & photos by Ronnie Hartman

1851: The year *The New York Times*, was founded; the year that the first edition of *Moby Dick* was published; the year that Yosemite Valley was discovered; and the founding year of the West Oxford Agricultural Society that grew into Maine's largest agricultural fair—one that includes a steer and oxen show that is not just the largest in Maine, but the largest on the entire planet.

One hundred sixty-five years after its founding, Fryeburg attracts more than 400,000 fairgoers to its eight-day event, with attractions that occupy 100 buildings and sprawl over 185 acres. The fair also boasts the oldest continuous 4-H beef sale in New England.

Naturally enough, the working horses, ponies, cattle and other livestock constitute the main reason for attendance by fairgoers, including this reporter. Anyone who comes to see the equines and the oxen, how-

ever, will want to find time to see as many of the fair's other events as possible—which will keep them running between the pulling barn, the sheep-dog trials where Border Collies and Kelpies show their stuff, the pig and calf scrambles, the harness races, the wreath making contests, the firemen's muster, the largest woodsmen's competition in North America, the flower show, tractor pulls, the skillet throw and the anvil toss. Not to mention the livestock competitions (which feature over 3,000 head of dairy and beef cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, llamas and poultry), umpteen entertainers, the midway rides, fireworks and the food vendors. Whew!

According to a 2015 study by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Southern Maine, the Fryeburg Fair generates about \$18 million of new spending per year, which translates to 420 jobs and \$1.2 million in sales

and income taxes. That money ends up in the coffers of both Maine and New Hampshire, since Fryeburg sits so close to the border. In 2015, this boon to the economy is happily provided by visitors from all 50 states and 17 foreign countries.

The day before the Fair's Sunday start, we rolled into the enormous RV park along with thousands of other campers and got situated, then strolled over to the scales to watch the pulling oxen weigh-in, and then proceeded to the steer and ox barns to see all the working breeds. Having had contact with only a few oxen in Minnesota—notably the milking short-horns from the Oliver Kelley Farm Museum near Elk River and the Brown Swiss raised by the Staricka family of Swanville—it was eye-opening to see not just Herefords, both black and red Holsteins, Belgian Blues, Jerseys, Charolais, Devons

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Justin Hussey winning the 8-horse hitch class for White Mountain Percherons, North Conway, NH, with Keith Worth riding shotgun.

The Fabulous Fryeburg Fair continued

and Durhams, but Dutch Belted, Normandes, Red Dutch Belted, Linebacks, Randalls and the giants of the ox world: Chianinis (pronounced Key-ah-nee-nees)—a white Italian breed fondly referred to by their admirers as “Chis.”

It quickly became apparent that we were no longer in Kansas—or in Minnesota. For New Englanders, cattle play another role in addition to the production of meat and milk. Learning about the folks who prize cattle for their trainability, and who shape them into working partners, was the next step in my education.

My first stop down this road was a visit with John Jenkinson of West Berlin, Vermont, who was waiting to work his 2-year-old milking shorthorns “Crown” and “Royal.” This year he left at home “the team

I learned on”—a pair of Holsteins that are now 14 years of age. “In their prime,” he reported, “Zeus and Hercules weighed 2,800 pounds apiece. They won ‘Best Holsteins on [the] Grounds’ and ‘Best Working Steers at the Fryeburg Fair’ in 2007.” In 2016, however, they were taking it easy at home after passing the torch to the two-year-olds.

John’s journey to becoming a teamster was a bit circuitous, in that he grew up in the suburbs of Boston, earned a degree in zoology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and started graduate work at Boston University before deciding that he preferred carpentry and farming. By then, he had met Carol, his future wife, with whom he settled on a farm “with overgrown fields that needed clearing, and barns in disrepair,” then acquired a horse, chick-

ens, calves and pigs.

The Jenkinsons brought up three kids on their farm, where they have been raising cattle for 40 years. Initially, they reared dairy replacement heifers that they sold on the free market. For the past ten years, John has contracted with a dairy farmer. He picks up yearling heifers in the spring and then feeds them for 15 months, through two summers and one winter. Then, having artificially inseminated them with semen from a bull of the owner’s choice, he sends them home as springing heifers to begin producing calves and milk. The Jenkinsons also keep a couple of cow-calf pairs for their own use, as well as the two pairs of working Holsteins.

John was mentored by local dairyman Robert Eastman, and he “dabbled with pulling the oxen,” but has mainly competed with them as show steers in cart class, log-scooting contests and log-twitching. “Folks who pull oxen,” he advised me with a grin, “are a different breed of cat.”

Since working steers (which are under four years of age) and oxen (steers four and above) requires frequent changes of yoke until they have reached their full size, John’s carpentry skills have not gone to waste, even when there are no farm buildings in need of repair. He makes his own (which can be expensive to buy), starting his calves with four-inch yokes and then building larger sizes inch-by-inch as the animals grow. His Holsteins now wear an 11-inch yoke—meaning that the distance across the inside of the bow is 11 inches at the level where they pass through the holes in the yoke.

By the time we had finished chatting, I was altogether taken with



Karna Johnson didn’t look like much of a powder puff when she competed with her Chianinis in the Powder Puff Pull.

the steers' sweet temperaments and it was time for the teamsters to put their oxen through their paces, demonstrating that they could respond to commands—step up, whoa, back, wait, gee and haw—as they negotiated an obstacle course.

In addition to the adult handlers, 4-H members were very well-represented, and after completing the course, they lined up their teams to show the enthusiastic crowd how they had hooked 46 oxen together a few months earlier to help move the historic Orleans County Grammar School of Brownington, Vermont, a third of a mile from its then-location to the site where it had stood from 1823 to 1869. To link the teams, the teamsters used steel triangles called “jingle bobs” that were fashioned by blacksmiths. It made for a very impressive sight.

The next day, I made my way over to the steer and ox barns—of which there are five, not to mention five dairy barns and two beef barns. In one of the barns I found Gail Billings spending her 28th year at the Fryeburg Fair as she tended her ten steers, along with her friend Becky Bushey, a first year competitor who had brought a pair of 2-year-old Holsteins named “Camo and Flauge.” Accompanying them was Gail's grandson, Coy Lyford, who co-owns a team of Red Dutch Belteds with his grandmother and who was making himself comfy on Flauge's rump.

Gail obviously appreciates many different dairy breeds, as her ten charges included Red and White Holsteins, Randalls and Dutch Belteds—both the black and red varieties. She showed me how to tell the difference between the Linebacks and the Randalls, as well as the Normandes (pronounced “normandies”) and pointed out various posters that depicted breeds and equipment for the edification of visitors.

Now in her third year as a 4-H instructor, Gail has solicited help from teamsters experienced in all facets of working cattle to expose her Working Steer students to a broad range of skills that include plowing, pulling and showing their cattle. At home in Randolph, Vermont, she takes a team “up-street” pretty much on a daily basis, and invites her students to accompany her with their own teams in advance of parades. In addition to benefiting the oxen by keeping them in shape and accli-

ating them to all the steer-eating boogers that they're sure to encounter in public settings, these outings are a treat for the community as she makes her way around a three-mile loop that passes a daycare center, a hospital, senior housing facilities, her husband's workplace and the drive-through at the bank.

As an aside, Gail pointed out a team that was being brought into the barn and explained how she teaches her students to slow their oxen down for safety purposes by turning them

around and backing them as they enter their stalls.

By the conclusion of the fair, Gail had earned a nice collection of ribbons and the Herdsman Award, which is judged on the quality of care provided to the livestock, excellence in the show ring and ability to communicate with the public. I, for one, certainly learned a lot from her.

Continuing my tour of the steer and oxen barns, I didn't have to go far to find Heidi Palmer hanging out

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The Fabulous Fryeburg Fair continued

with her oversized companion, Tony the Longhorn steer. After feeding her 12-year-old, 1,500-pound pet a few of his favorite treats—Toaster Strudels, Teddy Grahams and Pop Tarts, we sat down to gab. “Tony won’t eat Cheezits, but he likes Doritos—as long as they’re the cheese kind, not the ranch style.” Who knew that cattle could be so fussy?

As it turns out, Heidi serves as Maine’s 4-H State Activities

Coordinator and also as Superintendent of the Youth Working Steer Show at the “Big E”—the Eastern States Exposition that takes place in Springfield, Massachusetts—which draws its entrants from those who qualify at their local fairs in the surrounding states.

Mostly, we talked about the 4-H organization, in which she literally grew up. The group’s purpose, she explained, is “to teach life skills—which are, in fact, life savers. And

chief among those life skills are teamwork, responsibility, community service and leadership.”

She happens to be a prime example: “I joined 4-H at the age of eight,” she told me, “and spent 11 years as a member before going off to college, then returned 27 years ago to become a 4-H leader. During that time, I’ve mentored 140 kids through the program, including my daughter—now 25, who spent ten years in the Working Steer program.”

Heidi explained that 4-H is run through land grant universities, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and over 3,000 county offices across the country. The program was born over a century ago out of a need to educate farmers about new agricultural techniques developed by researchers on university campuses. The researchers wanted to share ideas with farmers, but discovered that the adults were far less receptive than young people, who were willing to experiment with new ideas and to share their experiences with their elders.

So, I’m gratified to learn, there is really nothing new about the fact that many of us are unable to grasp new technologies and must be introduced to them by our children—or, in my case, by grandchildren.

The program also connects public school education to country life. Heidi’s particular focus is on working steers and oxen, and she pointed out that teaching someone how to work cattle is a different skill from working cattle yourself. She teaches proper steer-handling techniques and emphasizes the fact that “if you respect the cattle, they will respect you back”—which, by no coincidence, describes her philosophy toward her pupils. “Kids will rise or fall,” she has learned, “to our expectations.”

One of Heidi’s particularly important training rules is that, “if your team is unable to make their final pull, you remove some weight and make another pull before leaving the arena, allowing them to succeed before returning them to the barn.” Obviously, promoting success is another principle that applies to raising children.

Heidi met her husband Jim, a fellow 4-H leader (who also pulls oxen), at the international 4-H Fair 15 years ago, and they were married in May of 2016 in the Fryeburg Fair Dairy Barn—under an oversized ox bow con-

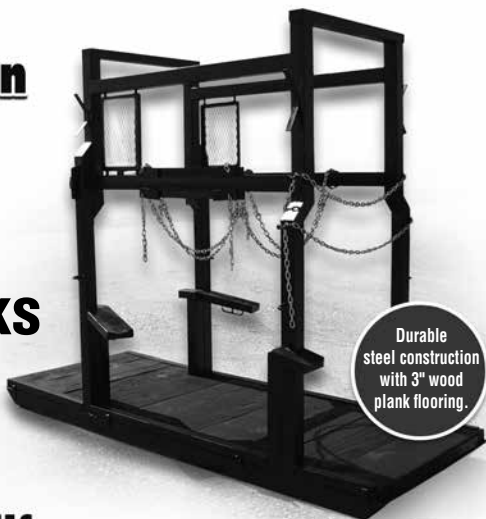


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This determined puller gave her near ox a helping hand.

structed by her dad. It appeared to me to have been fashioned for Babe the Blue Ox.

In parting, Heidi extolled the qualities of working cattle: "It's a myth that wagon trains were powered by horses. The pioneers actually pulled their wagons with cows, who produced milk as well as labor and who could also be eaten in a pinch. They were more steadfast than horses, easier keepers and calmer—not spooky." In addition, she said, "Cattle are very smart and have long memories. They know exactly where the tips of their horns are, as Tony proves by touching me gently when he wants attention or treats." This is one reason why fighting bulls routinely have the tips of their horns cut off just before entering the ring. It confuses them and is one of many factors that tip the balance in favor of the matador.

Over the course of several days, we watched the working oxen go through their paces and enjoyed seeing the calm manner in which both adults and kids cued their cattle to turn gee and haw by using voice commands and tapping them with goad sticks—on the high steer's left shoulder to turn gee and on the off steer's right shoulder to turn haw—and cued them to whoa by tapping them on the knees. To a large extent, the cattle seemed to amiably follow behind the teamsters. It was all very low key.

This was quite a contrast with the action in the pulling arena, where I found Superintendent Dick Hall, who has been running pulls for 44 years, 24 of them at the Fryeburg

Fair. Unlike the horse pullers with whom I'm familiar, the ox teamsters were—well, let's say "highly animated"—which I soon discovered was a means of getting their charges excited, in hopes that the excitement will encourage them to pull harder. Some of the handlers also gave their teams a helping hand by pushing on a rump or pulling on a horn. This is

a hugely popular event and both the distance pulls and the eliminations featured packed grandstands.

Eventually, I found my way over to one of the pulling barns to get a better education on the sport. There I found Scott Spencer of Orwell, Vermont, who was feeding a young pair of Chianinis, a couple of Belgian Blues—"the American variety," some Chi-Holstein crosses, a Belgian Blue-Chi cross and a steer best described as a Heinz 57.

The training techniques with which Scott has found success involve "reading the animal" to ensure that they will not be forced to keep going once

they're "out of gas" (as opposed to just being lazy). He teaches them to pull as a unit by hooking a pair to a load that neither can pull alone, but that can be managed with a joint effort. He asks them to move it ten or 20 feet and makes sure they're successful—the same philosophy that Heidi Palmer teaches to her 4-H youth.

"Today," Scott told me, "the competition has improved to where ten competitors, instead of three or four, are pulling the winning load in elimination pulls."

I also got a translation of a term used by the teamsters: Being "in the hole" doesn't refer to the batter who's next in line after the player who's "on deck." It means that "one member of the team is dropping back and not doing his share."

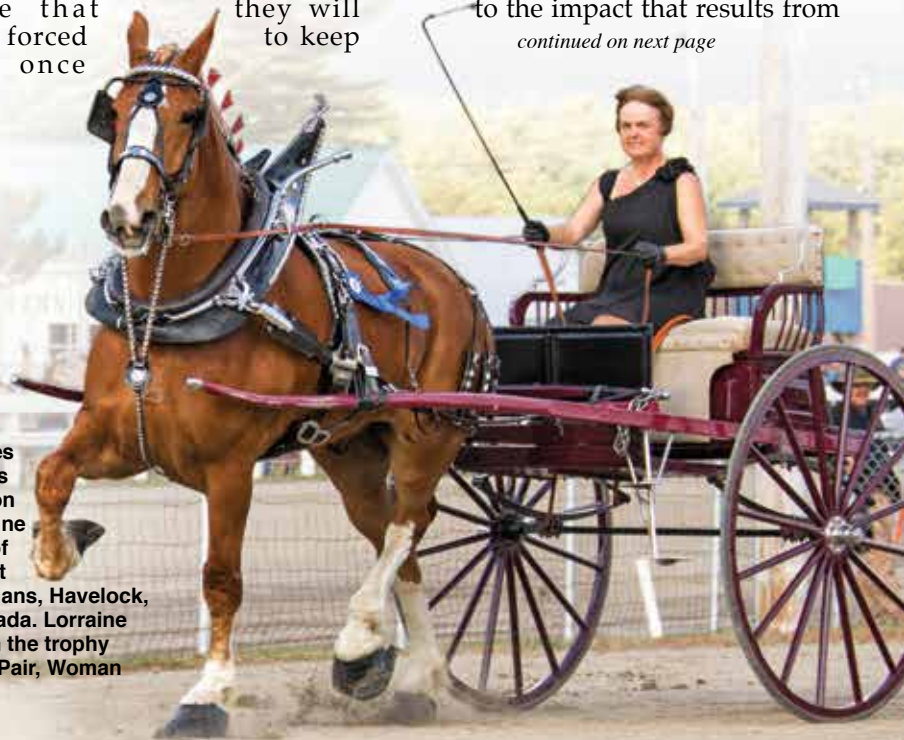
Scott took first place in the six-foot elimination pull for 2,100 pound oxen with "Jesse and James."

Since the three-part sequence of draft horse and pony shows did not begin until the third day of the fair, we also had time to take in some of the non-livestock events, such as the Skillet Throw for women and the Anvil Toss for men. As explained by Fair President Roy Andrews to the crowd in the bleachers, the skillets weigh 5-1/2 pounds and are custom-made from steel rather than the usual cast iron, as cast iron handles

break when they are subjected to the impact that results from

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The ladies cart class being won by Lorraine Thorne of Butternut Hill Belgians, Havelock, NB, Canada. Lorraine also won the trophy for Best Pair, Woman Driver.



The Fabulous Fryeburg Fair continued

a flight through the air. The anvils are a bit over three times as heavy. "Accuracy counts," contestants were told, because the distance that the missile lands from the center line is subtracted from the length of the throw.

In stiff competition, Jacob Pelkey won the anvil toss while his sister Hillary Pelkey won the skillet toss, with distances of 32.60 feet and 61.5 feet respectively—a payoff for all the time they spent practicing together.

They observe that, "If people are impressed by the way we throw iron, you should see our tantrums!"

One of the biggest draws at the Fryeburg Fair is the Woodsmen's Field Day, which, in its 49th year, attracted male and female competitors ranging from college age to recipients of Social Security, while fans filled the large grandstand and the track in front of it to the limit.

Actually, the fair needs to change the name of the event to Woodspersons' Field Day, because it

draws so many women participants, many of whom belong to college teams that have made ax throwing, bucksawing and crosscutting popular. The women also compete against each other in log rolling, the standing block chop and the underhand chop.

Old-timey skills like the spring-board chop are rarely seen except in the pages of books on logging history, making it particularly intriguing to watch as the contestants chopped grooves into tree trunks, jammed planks into them, leapt onto the planks, used them as a platform for chopping out the next groove and proceeded clear to the top of the tree, which they then chopped off to stop the clock.

University of Maine seniors Tyler Jepson and Kyle Williams, who were teamed up in the log rolling, were competing in tee-shirts that sported a college logo depicting a lumberjack and proclaiming, "I am a Sheepdog." When queried, they explained that they were training for conservation law enforcement and that their function, as police officers, would be to "provide protection and to keep the flock in line." Kyle came in first in the Rookie Standing Block Chop event and placed in both Rookie Woodchop and Rookie Bucksaw.

Modern-day logging methods are not ignored either: While the chopping, sawing, ax-throwing and log-rolling are going on in front of the grandstand, the track infield beyond the fence becomes the site of cable skidding, log loading, grapple skidding, hydraulic loading and pulp loading.

The skidding course was laid out in an area 35 by 250 feet and consisted of four 14-foot gates laid out in a zig-zag pattern, through which contestants had to pass with three 16-foot logs before reversing and coming back through the same gates, with penalties for hitting gates or—and I'm quoting directly from the rule book—"any other items such as fences, cars or judges." Cable skidding contestants had to attach a separate choker to each log and then hook them to the winch cable prior to climbing into the cab. The point of the competition was to demonstrate to woodlot owners that skidders can be used without doing damage. In the event of ties, winners were determined by the total board footage skidded by each contestant.

Log and pulp loading contestants were required to first unload and then



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reload a logging truck, using logs in the one contest and four cords of eight-foot wood in the other. First, second and third place winners were eligible to compete in hydraulic loading, which required them to load logs one at a time and then to hoist and load a full pail of water, with a ten-second penalty for each inch of water spilled.

Last, but not least, and clearly meant to hold the crowd's interest until the final moments of the action, came the tree felling, which required contestants to topple a tall tree directly on top of a smallish pumpkin laid on the ground 16 feet from the base of the tree. This event is, of course, judged on both time and accuracy. Of the four contestants who hit their mark, the fastest time (43.29 seconds) went to George Mattern of Preston, Connecticut, who beat his two nearest rivals by about 12 seconds.

On the third day of the fair, the draft horse and pony shows got underway. Fryeburg qualifies as a point show for the North American Six-Horse Hitch Classic Series, as well as for the North American Cart Classic Series.

Cart classes, pairs, unicorns, fours, sixes and eights were spread out over three consecutive mornings (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) to enable as many spectators as possible the opportunity to watch the action. Halter classes were held on Thursday after lunch, and on Friday youngsters competed in braiding and halter showmanship. The final climax was the Grand Parade on Saturday, which allowed competitors to strut



Claude Thorne of Butternut Hill Belgians took second place in the men's pair class.

their stuff in front of the grandstand yet again, and to collect trophies on top of the ribbons they had earned during the previous three days.

The classes all ran like clockwork, thanks particularly to the collaboration of an amazing team of women. Hope Ricker, past President of the Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs (MAAF), was asked to take over the show for the first time in 2015 and it is abundantly clear that the choice was an excellent one. Judge Linda Klinger of Glenwood City, Wisconsin, performed her duties with grace and style, while Jane Gray of Harrison, Maine, kept everything running smoothly in her role as Ringmaster. And all three credited Fryeburg's extraordinary announcer, the eloquent and erudite Ken Wheeling, with keeping the crowd attentive throughout the show—as he does every year—with his highly interesting commentary.

Ricker's goal in taking over the show was to grow attendance, and she is widely cred-

ited for doing an outstanding job in this regard. Jane Gray (whose "varsity team" of Percherons won the Big Six Showdown at the Big E on the previous weekend, two years after winning the Reserve Championship) credited Hope's administrative skills with her decision to bring one of her hitches to Fryeburg this year.

Sitting around a campsite with Hope and her husband/assistant Bruce Alexander one evening, I dug a little deeper into the role of the MAAF—which, I learned, is made up of volunteers from Maine's 26 privately run, but state-licensed fairs and is managed by a board of directors. The Association, I learned from Hope, runs educational seminars for fair officials, advises them of new rules, dispenses information, and encourages cooperation among them. The organization gives out six scholarships worth \$1,000 each to high school graduates who are planning for agriculture-related careers, which can range from farming to diesel mechanics. Fryeburg is the largest fair of the 26, as well as being the premiere fair for agricultural education. In a day and age when one fair-goer insisted that "eggs and meat come from grocery stores, not from farms," it's easy to see why this function is extremely important.

When Bruce and Hope met 24 years earlier, Bruce had a team and the kids also wanted horses. "Bruce

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Keith Worth, accompanied by Will Tennison, pilots Trippcrest Farm's unicorn entry from Harrison, ME.

Tammy Hutchinson drove her team to 2nd place in the mare team, woman driver class.



The Fabulous Fryeburg Fair continued

took the wood that he'd milled to build me a garage and built a barn instead," Hope says, rolling her eyes. The barn soon housed their son's draft horses and their daughter's riding horse. Bruce still shows in farm classes, but, oddly enough for someone who runs shows so brilliantly, Hope is actually nervous around horses.

At any rate, their daughter married a man who pulled oxen, to which the couple added show steers, and before they knew it, Hope and Bruce were running pulls. It was a natural progression for them to become active in their local fair, where she served as secretary and he served as vice president. Then an acquaintance who ran a lot of draft horse shows had to move, and she asked Hope to take over her responsibilities. Although Hope thought then that the job would be temporary, it's obvious how that worked out—and also how her enthusiasm has only grown.

"It's a whole subculture," she told me, going on to explain, "We're a fair family." No kidding: Hope's daughter is the Agricultural Fair Coordinator for the State of Maine Agriculture Department.

While Hope Ricker and Bruce Alexander came to the fair community by way of cattle and horses, Jane Gray got started by showing sheep. Both of her parents grew up on farms, and her father went on to become an agricultural agent, while her mother became a teacher. Jane showed four different breeds of sheep (because that was the maximum number you could show under your own name)—

primarily Dorsets, but subsequently Southdowns, Shropshires and her cousin's Hampshires.

In the 1980s, Jane acquired Belgian horses, but when she married, "my new husband owned more Percherons than I owned Belgians, so the Percherons won out. We started with two geldings, a stallion, and three or four mares. Today, I have two dozen horses at home and another 13 with Chad and Rhonda Cole of Pennwoods Percherons in Pennsylvania—ten hitch mares and three yearlings."

When I asked Jane how many foals

she had bred and raised, she laughed and told me, "I stopped counting after passing one hundred."

She now A.I.'s about a half dozen mares every year. Her favorite studs are Pleasant View King, BP Prestige, Recount and WestWind King's Talisman. At the time of the Fryeburg Fair, she was in the process of acquiring a five-month-old filly, Ropp's Ginger, from Henry Ropp in Missouri. At the moment, the filly was ensconced at the farm of Robert Hershberger in Ohio, "working her way East. The filly was sired by Skyview Count On It, who," she told me, "throws very exciting hitch mares." In fact, a full-sister to Ginger, Ropp's Rose Ann, is a lead mare in one of the Trippcrest hitches.

One of Jane's mares actually conveyed Heidi Palmer—a cousin of Jane's husband—to that May wedding-under-the-oxbow that took place on the Freyburg grounds—something Heidi had forgotten to mention. The Vis-à-vis also served to take the newly married couple "on a jaunt around the fairgrounds" after they said their vows.

Jane, who is currently serving her second three-year term on the board of the Percheron Association, is already in the thick of chairing the 2018 World Percheron Congress in Iowa. One of her hitches won the Supreme Mare Six-Horse Hitch Championship at the 2010 Congress.



Sawyer Hussey won the youth pair class with his father Justin Hussey along for the ride.

In addition to the Trippcrest horses, the 2016 Fryeburg Fair attracted exhibitors from Mountain's Edge Farm (Sean and Jennifer Lang, and their children Jeremy and Emily, of Hinesburg, Vermont); Isham Brook Farm (Bill Roleau of Lincoln, Vermont); Butternut Hill Belgians (Claude and Lorraine Thorne of Havelock, New Brunswick); White Mountain Percherons (Justin Hussey from North Conway, New Hampshire); the Hutchinson Belgians (Harry and Tammy Hutchinson from Andover, Maine); Hidden Lake Farm (Jamie and Wanda Hutchinson from Oxford, Maine); and others.

Harry Hutchinson was understandably eager to talk about the four generations of Hutchinsons who show draft horses at Fryeburg. He experienced his first fair 61 years ago as a nine-year-old 4-H member, showing steers and dairy cows. "But I got sick of leading animals," he told me. "I wanted to ride instead." That's how he came to show Belgians.

Harry's four children all showed at the fair and two of them continue to do so. The Hutchinson clan also includes five grandchildren and one great-grandchild. "I've seen a big change here," he remarked, "from tents to comfortable barns. It's great returning each year and seeing old friends. It's really like a big family."

Like their dad, Harry's kids also started their fair experience with steers, and as his grown children drifted over to join the conversation, the banter took a turn familiar to anyone with siblings, as they jostled over which of them got the best steer when it came time to choose calves each year. The consensus was that Jamie usually prevailed, but one year he broke his arm playing football in the show ring, so sister Jennifer inherited his steer. I imagine that this is still a source of discussion over the annual Thanksgiving turkey. Yet, as Harry pointed out, and the family members all agreed, "We bicker until it's time to go to work, and then everyone pitches in."

Jennifer's oldest child, Jeremy Lang, now 18, drove his own 4-up this year, using his own wagon. Two of his siblings, meantime, competed in the youth class. "If we were all in the same barn," Harry pointed out with obvious pride, "we could fill an entire side."

So how did it come about that Jamie drives black horses while the

rest of the family shows Belgians? Naturally, there was a story. "Some years ago, Jamie went to work for a fellow who showed Percherons. Eventually he purchased his own—surreptitiously. It was not until he drove into the ring at the Fryeburg Fair that his dad discovered what was going on. And the preference for one color over another extended to the family portrait taken for *The DHJ*: It could not be shot with any horses in the background, so that no one would have "the wrong color of horse" in the picture.

The Fair also attracted a loyal bunch of Haflinger enthusiasts that included Brian and Darlene Bean of Paris, Maine, along with son Lance and grandchildren JayLee and Jeremy, who drive—naturally enough—the Bean Family Haflingers of Bryant Pond, Maine. George Merrill of Thoroughfare Acres came from Sabattus, Maine, while Sproul Farm was represented by Margaret Sproul from Newcastle, Maine (who won Best Pair, Woman Driver in the pony division), and by Wendall Smith (who won Best Pair, Male Driver), with—naturally enough—the same pair of Hafes. Jamie Gonneville from Lyman, Maine, brought his Knotafarm Hafes, while Albert and Sharon Rheault of Apple Shade Farm hauled their horses from Biddeford, Maine, and Bob & Terry Nunes trailed their North Country ponies from Stoneham, Maine.

Darlene Bean, Shannon Avery and Mary Ellen Andrews were cheering on family members from the rail one day, so while teamsters were hitching horses between classes, I ambled across the ring to find out more about them.

Darlene and Shannon have been coming to the Fryeburg Fair for 23 years, for 20 of which the family has been showing Haflingers. "We used to get to ten shows each year," they told me, "but the Fryeburg Fair stands out for its size and its grandeur."

The Bean family patriarch is Brian Bean. His son Lance drives the large hitches, while Lance and Jennifer's daughter, 14-year-old Jaylee, and their son, 17-year-old Brayden, demonstrate their driving skills in the youth classes. Mary Ellen, Lance's aunt, pointed out that "the large ring allows the horses to show their stuff." How many horses have they got in the barn, I wondered. "We brought seven and a half horses this year," Mary Ellen retorted. The half-a-horse was a mini that indeed looks like a tiny copy of a Haf.

By week's end, Lance Bean had won the Grand Master Fryeburg Fair Teamster's Trophy—awarded last year for the first time—for the second year in a row.

Back in the draft horse barn, I stopped to visit with Claude Thorne, who won both the Men's Cart Class and the Tandem Class—

continued on next page

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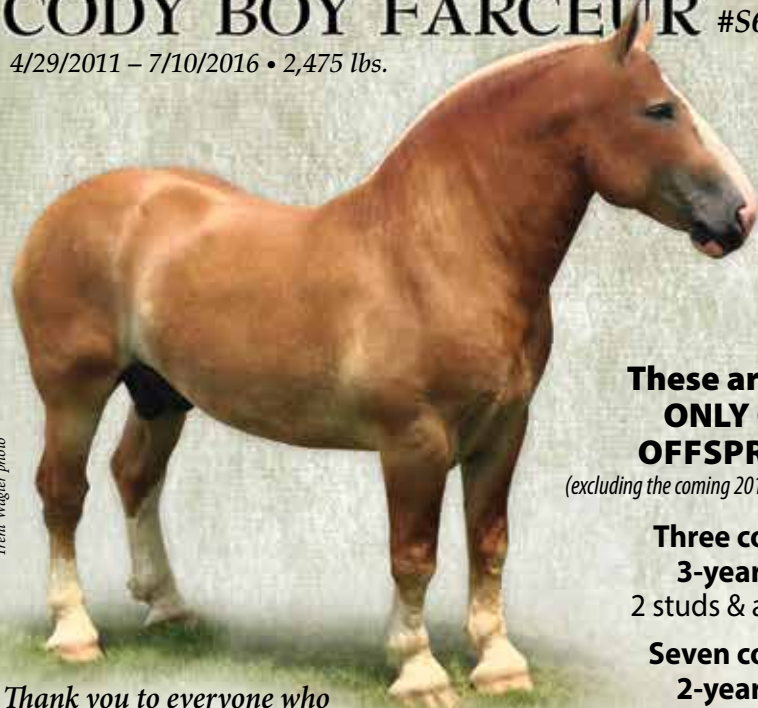
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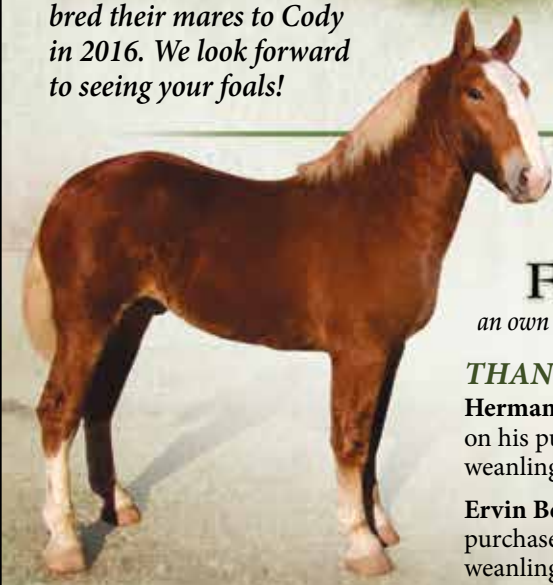
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The Fabulous Fryeburg Fair continued

as well as two red and two yellow ribbons—and his wife Lorraine, not to be outdone, won the Ladies' Cart Class and the Women's Pair Class, as well as the trophy for Best Pair of Draft Horses, Woman Driver. The Thornes responded enthusiastically when asked what was special about the Fryeburg Fair, Lorraine heartily agreeing with Claude's assessment that, "Fryeburg is the best fair anywhere. I can't say enough good things about it. It's more than the horses. Everyone is family. And the organizers take good care of you."

On the penultimate day of the fair, competitors from all of the livestock events assembled on the race-track along with a caravan of vintage automobiles, bands, politicians, members of fraternal organizations, clowns and officials to participate in the Grand Parade. Trophy presentations were made and Fair President Roy Andrews thanked the crowd for "supporting the fair with your ticket money, which allowed us to build a new barn and a new restroom this past year, as well as to purchase an additional 11-1/2 acres of land and to add 200 campsites." He announced that there are 20,000 4-H members in Maine and that the Fair had donated \$10,000 to the organization in 2016. "By the end of the weekend," Andrews added, "we expect to have entertained visitors from every state in the union." As it turned out, visitors from 17 foreign countries signed in at the History Hall, including some from as far away as New Zealand, Australia and South Korea.

Maine's Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Walter Whitcomb, added, "At this moment there are more people here on these grounds than at any other place in the state of Maine, other than Portland."

Horse show judge Linda Klinger summed things up when she described the fair as, "Awesome, simply fantastic," then added the observation that "the Fryeburg Fair belongs on everyone's bucket list."

Actually, one trip probably won't do it. I will definitely need to return to Maine in order to view all the activities and exhibits that could not be fitted into eight days, and to revisit the folks who make it a world class event.

The 2017 fair will run from October 1 through 8. Here's hoping to see you there!