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Exhibitions & Museums
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www.fryeburgfair.org

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FRYEBURG FAIR

The West Oxford Agricultural Society (presenters of the Fryeburg Fair) was incorporated on June 3, 1891. Originally nine Maine towns were included, with six New Hampshire towns added in 1888.

After moving from town to town for the first few years, a permanent fair site was purchased in Fryeburg. After nearly 30 years it moved to its present location, north of town, with the purchase of 26 acres for $133. The first fair was held there in October 1885. During the next 100 plus years it has expanded to 200 acres and includes 100 permanent buildings, with over 3,000 camping sites. Currently, about 300,000 attend the fair annually.

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Pay One Price for all rides on Tuesday (10/4), Wednesday (10/5), Thursday (10/6), and last Sunday (10/19) from 10:00am to Close - $30.00! All rides on Sunday (10/2), Monday (10/3) from 10am to Close - $25.00!

DAILY ENTERTAINMENT

Fryeburg Fair is pleased to present over 200 of Maine’s most talented musicians and entertainers throughout the Fair week. Performances are ongoing in five different locations, the Waterwheel Park by the Frost Gate, Chippewa Field, next to the Pulling Ring, Haysees Theater by the Orange Gate, and the Draft Horse Park by the Llama Barn. Entertainment brochures are available at each gate and the information booth.

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

Historically, traffic has been heavier on Saturday due to our great main event, the Parade, afternoon Midway and Harness Racing. To avoid traffic we suggest that you come early and stay late. Also, for your convenience and to help with traffic flow, Fryeburg Fair has posted alternate routes to and from the Fairgrounds.

Call 935-3268 for parking and general information. For camping info call 935-2912.

See you in 2023 - Oct. 1 through Oct. 8

THE CONWAY DAILY SUN, FRYEBURG FAIR - Wednesday, October 5, 2022 – Page 19

24 Hour Emergency Number During Fair 207-935-3268

SUBJECT TO CHANGE IF NEEDED

Strollers, wheelchairs & scooters are available to rent at the “Blue Gate” and “Orange Gate” on a first come, first serve basis. Free Admission to Grandstand (Except Racing Boxes)

Agricultural Exhibitions Center Open Daily 9 am - 9 pm
Schoolhouse Open Daily 9 am - 5 pm Farm Museum Open Daily 9 am - 8 pm

Museum Craft Demonstrations Open Daily 10 am - 5 pm
Fiber Demonstrations Open Daily 9 am - 5 pm
Llama/Apaca Demonstrations Daily @ 11 am and on-going

Key to Buildings

AEC Agricultural Exhibition Center - Pulling Ring
CC Craft Center - Rabbit Barn
CJE Christmas Tree Exhibit - RG Racing Grandstand
FC Fiber Center - SSWG Swan & Goat Grandstand
LSA Livestock Show Arena - WISA Woodward Show Arena
MVP Mountain View Pavilion

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5

6:30 am Show of Dairy, Friesian, Cat Owls, Mbb (New Unicorn) /High Youth Cat / RG Shear Show - all day / MVP Dairy Show Milking Shorthorn & Brown Swiss - WISA Beef Show Ojosinska, Hereford & Shorthorns - LSA Ox Pulling - 2000 lbs. - Distance / PR 10:00 am Flower Show - Exp. I 10:30 am Ox Pulling - 900-1500 lbs. Percentage - Distance / PR 10:30 am Wreathing Demo at Christmas Tree Exhibit 12:00 pm Flower Show - Exp. I Sheep Shearing Demo - MVP 10:00 pm Open Pig Scramble / PR (Ages 5-10) Enroles Close 12 PM (Drawing) Show of Working Shears Handly Class for kids - SSG 2 Crested Apeole Contest - AEC Sheep Show / MVP 1:30 pm Harness Racing - RG 2:00 pm Flower Show - Exp. I Wreathing Demo at Christmas Tree Exhibit Horse Pulling - Sweatsicks - Distance / PR 3:00 pm Horse Pulling - 3000 lbs. - 1st Elim. (Ralph Gasheer Memorial) /PR 4:00 pm Flower Show - Exp. I Sheep Shearing Demo after Sheep Show - MVP 6:30 pm Horse Pulling - Single Skeeters - 2nd Elim. (Frank Gossen Memorial) /PR 8:00 pm Night Show - Dirty Deeds - The AC/DC Experience

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6

8:00 am Show of Working Oxen, Show Oxen & Steers - SSG Show of Dalley Hens - TRW Show of Dalley Hens - PRW 9:00 am Show of Dalley Hens - TRW Show of Dalley Hens - MVP 9:00 am Show of Working Oxen, Show Oxen & Steers - SSG Show of Dalley Hens - PRW Beef Show Beef Shorthorns, Angus, Aberdeen - LSA Dairy Show Holstein and Ayrshire - WISA 10:00 am Ox Pulling - 3000 lbs. - Distance / PR Flower Show - Exp. I

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7

9:00 am On Pulling Youth Teamster Class 1000 lbs. (Teamster aged 12 & under) G Robinson Youth Outstanding Teamster Award (Yale) 10:00 am Flower Show - Exp. I Call Scramble - RG 10:00 pm Open Pig Scramble / PR (Ages 5-10) Entries Close 12 PM (Drawing) Show of Working Shears Handly Class for kids - SSG 10:30 am On Pulling Youth Teamster Class 1500 lbs. (Teamster aged 15 & under) G Robinson Youth Outstanding Teamster Award (Yale) Fryeburg Fair Presidents Trophy and Runner-up award - PR 10:30 am 4-H Market Lamb Auction - LSA 4-H Bar Show - MVP Wreathing Demo at Christmas Tree Exhibit 12:00 pm Flower Show - Exp. I Wreathing Demo at Christmas Tree Exhibit Horse Pulling - Sweatsicks - Distance / PR 1:30 pm Horse Pulling - 3000 lbs. - 2nd Elimination / PR 1:30 pm Wreathing Demo at Christmas Tree Exhibit Horse Pulling - Sweatsicks - Distance / PR 2:30 pm Horse Pulling - Single Skeeters - 3rd Elim. (Frank Gossen Memorial) /PR 8:00 pm Night Show - Dirty Deeds - The AC/DC Experience

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8

9:00 am Speaker - American Farm Bureau - RG 10:00 am Flower Show - Exp. I 11:00 am Wreathing Demo at Christmas Tree Exhibit 11:30 am Harness Racing - RG 1:30 pm 4-H Show Sheep - SSG 2:30 pm Horse Pulling - 2000 lbs. - Distance / PR 3:00 pm Flower Show - Exp. I 4:30 pm Horse Pulling - Single Skeeters - Distance (Arthur & Libby Memoral) /PR 5:00 pm Night Show - Rare X Outer Limits Tour features Ronnie Mac

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9

6:30 am Church Service - Hayeswood Theatre 9:00 am Wreathing Demo at Christmas Tree Exhibit 9:30 am 4-H Show Sheep Showmanship Contest - SSG 10:00 am 4-H Beef Show - MVP 10:00 am Flower Show - Exp. I 10:30 am Open Pig Scramble / PR (Ages 5-10) Entries Close at 9:30 am (Drawing) 11:00 am Catholic Mass - Hayeswood Theatre Wreathing Demo at Christmas Tree Exhibit 12:00 pm On Pulling - 3000 lbs. (Two pair of Oxen driven by one Driver) Percentage Distance each team must weigh 2400 lbs. / PR 12:30 pm Sheep Shearing Demo - MVP 1:00 pm Children’s Pie Eating Contest - AEC 1:30 pm Hayseed Theatre 2:00 pm Flower Show - Exp. I 2:30 pm Children Decorate a Farm - Themed Cookie / AEC 3:00 pm Following Races is 4WD Pull - RG (Grandstand seats reserved until racing ends) - Infield Area

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NEWSPAPER AD

The Conway Daily Sun
64 Seavey Street North Conway • 603-356-3456
www.conwaydailysun.com

Copy of newspaper ad not redacted.
FRYEBURG, Maine — The Fryeburg Fair saw a strong opening day opened Sunday with large crowds returning to the fairgrounds. At 25,064, paid attendance for Sunday was comparable to that recorded in 2019, and nearly 10,000 more than the 16,000 people who paid to attend the fair on opening Sunday last year.

Although COVID was expected to put a damper on last year’s fair, the numbers recovered by the end of the week, with 2021 attendance was 165,817, up over 4,000 from 2019’s tally of 161,476.

Fair publicist Rachel Andrews Damon expected even better this year, saying on Friday, “2021 paid attendance was between 160,000-170,000. And 2020 we were closed because of COVID.

“There’s something in the air that tells me we’ll do very well this year. There are major midway improvements for fairgoers with our new ride vendor, Dreamland Amusements, and they’re bringing in new food vendors and we have all of our regulars.

“It might be the weather we’ve seen this week that is inspiring that fall, fun, Fryeburg Fair, French fries, Fair food, family, friends, feeling, but it’s there in full force. Hahah!”

The new midway by Dreamland Amusements has been well received with fairgoers commenting on its fun colorful rides and overall appearance. (MARK GUERRINGUE PHOTO)

The new has been well received with fairgoers commenting on its fun, colorful rides and overall appearance. Most of the familiar food vendors are back this year, and stalls and food trucks offering barbecue sandwiches, bloomin’ onions, fried dough, sausage and peppers and all the traditional fair treats were much in evidence Sunday.

Some have been excited to see the return of Sunflower Farm Pizza at its new location near the Dairy Bar after skipping last year’s fair. Sunflower owner Vinnie Lanavaro said he was happy to be back and missed being there over the past two years.

The Fryeburg Fair annually draws about 300,000 people during its eight-day run. That number includes both paid and free admissions. Children under 12 get in free every day, and senior citizens over 65 are free on the Tuesday of the fair.

Fair attendance in recent years hasn’t quite been up to the all-time record for paid attendance of 199,266, set in 2004.

No daily attendance records were set in 2021. The biggest single day is always Saturday; fair attendance on that day was 34,450.

Daily paid attendance records over the years include:

- Monday — 26,017 in 2014.
- Tuesday — 17,014 in 2006.
- Wednesday — 20,125 in 2001.
- Thursday — 20,438 in 2009.
- Friday — 31,451 in 2012.
- Saturday — 46,834 in 2000.

The fair continues with animal exhibitions, shows and auctions, agricultural exhibits, pulling competitions, horse racing and more through Sunday, Oct. 9.
Mem McKay, 71, Windham, Maine: “My favorite memories of Fryeburg Fair will always be the people. I’ve made so many friendships here and love seeing everyone each year. I started working at Fryeburg Fair in 1984 as the Medic Supervisor. I’ve just retired from that and will be working in the Farm Museum demonstrating historical skills like museum spinning, knitting, and tatting. And generally doing all the things I love!” (RACHEL ANDREWS DAMON PHOTO)

Don Dougay, 76, Fryeburg & Chattanooga, Tenn.: My favorite memory is time spent at the shuffleboard courts working with Dick Snow and his family, teaching and watching the excitement of whole families playing together. Wife, Penny Snow Dougay, 68, Fryeburg & Chattanooga, TN: I grew up in Fryeburg and as a little girl I loved watching with wonder the beautiful animals from surrounding farms being walked around by children. I loved the pig scrambles, the Firemen’s Muster, the French fries, and working in the New Church Booth as a teenager. My all-time favorite thing about the fair is the music everywhere on the fairgrounds.” (RACHEL ANDREWS DAMON PHOTO)

Sisters Emily, 16, and Olivia Chaine, 12, Fryeburg. Emily is a junior at Fryeburg Academy and her sister, Olivia, is a seventh grader at Molly Ockett School in Fryeburg. Emily: “My favorite memory was watching the fireworks in 2021 with my friends.” Olivia: “My favorite memory is camping at Fryeburg Fair every year.” The Chaine sisters have attended the Fair every year of their lives. (RACHEL ANDREWS DAMON PHOTO)

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Willow Carter
Trenton Graham
Dan Parkhurst
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Scan here for more info!

See street musician play times and locations at settlersgreen.com/events
Spectacular night shows at the grandstand at Fryeburg Fair continue tonight with Dirty Deeds — The AC/DC Experience out of Boston.

All night shows start at 8 p.m. at the Grandstand. Admission to the fair covers the show with no extra charge.

Dirty Deeds has been touring for 20 years, bringing a high energy and wildly entertaining tribute to one of the world’s best rock bands, AC/DC, to venues around New England.

Not only do they capture the unique tones of the supergroup but they also mimic the antics and appearance of AC/DC. Making use of interactive video, lighting, and functional theatrical props, Dirty Deeds recaptures the essence of an AC/DC concert. Find out more at theacdcexperience.net.

Thursday’s show is not a musical performance but rather a return of RaveX, a the spectacular motorsports show that appeared at the fair last year.

This freestyle motorsports show promises spectacular stunts and big air. The Outer Limits Tour, based in South Portland, Maine, includes all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles and dirt bikes.

The owners of Rave X Motorsports, Ralph Gallagher and Dave Carlberg, started hosting freestyle shows in 2005 with a small freestyle ramp and some good friends. The show was a hit, and over the years the air kept getting bigger, the ramp gaps longer and the tricks gnarlier gaining fans across North America.

Today, Outer Limits Tour performs in front of thousands of people and features riders from all over the world. But you can see them right here at the fair. Find out more at ravexmotorsports.com.

Friday’s performance features country music performer Alexandra Kay. Kay is an independent country music artist, with a background in R&B and hip-hop. Her voice and style have been compared to country music legends Dolly Parton, Lee Ann Womack and Alison Krauss. Her website notes Kay’s strong following on social media platforms, with her music having been viewed hundreds of millions of times across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, and says she is “bringing country music back to it’s roots.”

In 2022, Kay has been touring with Tim McGraw, Tracy Lawrence, Clay Walker, Russell Dickerson and Brandon Davis. For more information, go to alexandrakayofficial.com.

Friday’s performance ends with a fireworks display.
Wagons exhibit features from Marshall collection

BY TOM EASTMAN
THE CONWAY DAILY SUN

FRYEBURG, Maine — No visit to the Fryeburg Fair is complete without a visit to the Horse-Drawn Wagons barn, a fixture at the fairgrounds since 2004.

On loan from antique wagon collectors Sut and Margaret Marshall of Madison, the exhibit this year features 25 wagons.

“My wife puts up with me. I say it’s a hobby, but some might call it an addiction. I had a doctor tell me that once — so I got another doctor,” said Sut Marshall on a pre-fair preview of this year’s display.

The setup this year is slightly different, with a few wagons put by Sut and son Todd Marshall against the wall opposite where most of the wagons are traditionally placed.

Asked why he loves his 100-plus wagon collection so much, Sut, 80, former proprietor of Abbott’s Dairy in Conway and a longtime modest but generous community benefactor with Margaret, answered, “I just feel these wagons are part of our history and they belong here in New England. I think it would be a real loss if they ever left.”

Over the years, they have assembled their collection with the help of Ken Wheeling of Monkton, Vt., a carriage expert, author and retired teacher whom Sut respectfully calls, “the Professor.”

“He is my mentor, my collaborator and my treasured friend,” said Sut.

Sut also thanks son Todd, a farmer on the West Side Road in Conway, for always doing the bulk of the physical work of transporting the wagons to the fairgrounds every year.

Others who are part of the effort each year include the mother-and-daughter duo of Barbara Hoyt and Mary Miller of Madison, who add the flowers and plant arrangements to each year’s exhibit.

He also gave special recognition to April Dilucchio, who dusts the carriages all year long and makes sure they are in all of their splendor for each year’s display at the fair.

“That’s not an easy job — it involves climbing atop these wagons, some of them are 10 feet tall. People don’t realize these things don’t stay clean by themselves. She is invaluable,” said Sut.

He also took the opportunity to thank the fair management, finance community, maintenance and front office people.

“Without their support the wagons display at the fair would never have gotten started 20 years ago,” said Sut, adding, “We have been honored to be part of the Fryeburg Fair family.”

He said being in the wagon and coach collection business has changed over the past decade, as younger people have not taken up the reins, so to speak, of following in their parents’ avocation.

“There have been many collections of carriages that have gone on the auction block in the past decade as a result,” said Sut.

Showcasing the best of the Marshalls collections under different themes, the exhibit changes every year. Past exhibit themes have included: Gypsy Wagons, World War I, All English Wagons and People Movers.

This year’s Horse-Drawn Wagon theme is once again a “Favorites” collection.

First up is a four-wheel hose reel cart, a fiery red and yellow spoked wagon situated near the entrance.

“After arriving at the scene of a fire,” the card in front of the wagon notes, “the hose would be pulled over the roller bar at the rear of the vehicle and connected to whatever source of water was available … The re-winding of the hose for this vehicle takes at least three strong men to accomplish: one to keep the wheel moving, one to guide the hose neatly onto the reel and one to feed the hose to the vehicle.”

Other displays include an English buggy, a black wagon built for two people; and a Charles Cretor popcorn wagon, manufactured in Chicago, Ill., and always a popular sight in any amusement park and many a street corner on a warm summer night — the trademark Cretor’s Clown turns the drum of the peanuts and the corn popper, proclaimed to be “self-buttering and salting,” can still pour out a batch of fresh popcorn.

see WAGONS page 24
WAGONS from page 23

Others include a coal wagon, and a beautiful maroon Sidney Run Farms of Ohio stock and grain wagon, designed to haul hogs to market with stake sides to allow for open-air transport.

A favorite near the entrance is a dark red Concord Coach, built by the Abbot-Downing Co. of Concord.

A second is also on display, Abbot-Downing No. 605, said to be the last Abbot-Downing coach ever built in 1902. It was purchased by Jordon Smith of Sonoma, Calif., in 1998 and donated to the Marshalls in 2021 because the family believed it ought to return to the East Coast.

Lewis Downing and J. Stevens Abbot started building them in 1826 and the last one was built in 1902. They made about 1,800, of which about 161 are left — 22 of those are in New Hampshire and of those, 11 are in the city of Concord.

Another returning favorite is the Mount Washington Hotel Omnibus. A large vehicle, it was intended for carrying guests from hotels and railroad stations as well as along busy streets. It did double duty when it was used to provide excursion trips to New Hampshire’s glens and notches, especially Crawford and Franconia Notches.

Another beauty with ties to the White Mountains is a green Mountain Wagon, also made by the Abbot-Downing Co. and also used to ferry hotel guests around forest glens and up mountaintops on carriage roads. The fair also owns one of the wagons, which is often used to ferry trustees in the annual Grand Livestock Parade the Saturday of fair week. That latter wagon was donated to the fair by late fair president Phil Andrews Sr.

LEFT: An English garden-seat omnibus is among the wagons on display this year at the Fryeburg Fair. ABOVE RIGHT: A Sicilian donkey cart, known as a carretto, is adorned with decorative panels and carved heads. BELOW RIGHT: A Cretors’ fresh roasted peanuts and popcorn wagon from Chicago was once a popular sight on street corners. (RACHEL SHARPLES PHOTOS)
Along with the Concord Coaches, favorite every year are the Romany wagons, or vardos, one of which is on display this year. This year’s is the bow-top vardo, the largest of the three types of canvas-topped vehicles used by the Romany and the only one with a solid wooden front and back.

The wagon is lavishly decorated with colorfully painted depictions of fruit, along with green tendrils and vines running everywhere.

“The Gypsy wagons all date to the early 1900s,” said Sut. “The first craftsman would build the wagon; the second did the ornate carvings; and the third did the painting. And when they got done, they had something pretty ornate. Then the gypsies would travel the countryside in small groups, camping in a farmers’ field or vacant lot till they were asked to move on.

“They were quite resourceful; they had their own culture, very self-contained,” said Sut.

You’ll also find a sheepherder’s wagon, straight out of every western movie you’ve ever watched, along with a famed James Cunningham & Co. of Rochester, N.Y., hearse, featuring a mahogany...
interior fitted with silver plated mounts, rollers and stops fitted with draperies.

Back again is the Leisy Brewery Dray Company of Cleveland, Ohio, fitted with eight large barrels and 13 medium barrels, stacked against a raked series of varnished poles held in metal stanchions. The brewery was started in 1873 and by 1917 was producing 355,000 barrels of premium beer.

A Studebaker Street Sweeper, one of Sut and Margaret Marshalls’ favorites, is back on display — it was used to sweep the streets throughout America in the early 1900s.

Other vehicles on display include a Swiss Army mountain wagon, an ornately decorated Sicilian carretto, a Hansom cab, a circa 1890 U.S. Mail cart, a Knackerman’s cart (described as a “rather grisly but a very necessary vehicle in days when horses were required” to do all sorts of farm work, including the removal of dead horses); and a Watkins Wagon, used by vendors selling goods on the backroads of New England.

Since starting their collection more than 25 years ago, the Marshalls’ group of wagons numbered as many as 200, but which Sut has since trimmed down to “just” 100.

“My family would like me to cut it back to one, not 100,” laughed Sut.

So, how did Sut and Margaret get into wagon collecting (or more to the point, how did Sut get into it, which then by necessity required Margaret’s support?)

“About 28 years ago, my father wanted to give my brother (Pit) and me a wagon each for Christmas because we both had a horse but no wagon,” said Sut.

“Dad heard that (late North Conway Bank president) Jean Fernandez had some wagons for sale. He had nine. We couldn’t quite make up our mind which of the nine we wanted, so Dad said he’d take all nine and then we would decide later and he would then sell the other seven after we’d made our choice. So, that’s how it got started.”

They stored eight of the wagons at the late Chet Lucy’s warehouse in West Oxford — but then tragedy struck and those eight were lost in April 1996 when two juveniles burned the warehouse. Luckily, a carriage had once belonged to the late Dr. Harold Shedid — known as the “bone doctor” for his early work in setting bones for pioneering skiers in the 1930s in North Conway — had been stored at a different location.

“I still have that one,” said Sut.

After that, Fernandez had two Concord coaches for sale — Sut chose one that still had its original coat of paint and design, and that had once operated between Northwood to Epsom, N.H., and then from Bridgton to Harrison, Maine, after that.

“That was really kind of the beginning of it,” said Sut. “After that, we met Ken Wheeling, who is so knowledgeable about carriages. He had come to North Conway and stopped by Dick Plusch Antiques and asked if he knew if anyone collected wagons in the valley. And Dick referred him to me.

“So Ken came down to the dairy building and that was the start of our friendship. He is like family now and we talk every week. I call him ‘the Professor’ because he is just so knowledgeable — not just about wagons, but about everything. He will be returning to join us at the fair, as he has done since our first year in 2004,” Sut said.

In a phone interview, Wheeling — who regularly writes scholarly articles for the Carriage Journal — spoke about his equally high esteem for the Marshalls and their collection.

“Their collection is top of the line,” said Wheeling, 84. “Sut and Margaret started out collecting commercial vehicles — very few people collect commercial vehicles, and none of the collections are as vast as Sut and Margaret’s.”

“To me, I just think these vehicles are part of our history that should be saved. And once they are gone, they are gone,” said Sut.

The Fryeburg Fair runs Oct. 2-9. For more information, call (207) 935-3268 or go to fryeburgfair.org.
What are you looking forward to at the fair?

BY RACHEL ANDREWS DAMON
SPECIAL TO THE CONWAY DAILY SUN

We asked students at Molly Ockett Middle School what they were looking forward to at the Fryeburg Fair this week. Here are some of their responses.

Kaylan Forrest, seventh grade, Fryeburg: “I like being there friends and showing animals. I show pigs with Springmont Farms and help them as part of the Curly Tails group. I know there are new piglets that were born on Saturday that will be at the fair!”

Jada Bovee, eighth grade, Lovell: “I really like the rides. They’re really fun. And the food is pretty good. I love the cows. The whole experience is really nice.”

Grace Bryan, eighth grade, Lovell: “I like going around with my friends. I like the rides and the food. Fryeburg Fair’s pretty cool overall.”

Corissa Landry, seventh grade, Lovell: “I can’t wait to hang out with my friends and show pigs and goats. I also help with Springmont Farms and the Curly Tails group. I love going on the scarier rides and my favorite food is Steve’s Fries.”

Grace McDougall, eighth grade, Fryeburg: “My favorite thing about the Fair are the rides — especially the scary ones. I love the French fries.”

Matthew Bariteau, eighth grade, Sweden: “My favorite thing is the food — a lot of the meats! Italian sausage. Oh and I like cotton candy. I love to see all the animals, the cows, pigs, chickens.”

Sirina O’Connell, eighth grade, Fryeburg: “I love seeing the draft horses, and the animals in general, the cows, and the goats.”

Owen Walker, eighth grade, Stow: “I like being there friends and showing animals. I show pigs with Springmont Farms and help them as part of the Curly Tails group. I love going on the scarier rides and my favorite food is Steve’s Fries.”

Tyler Drew, eighth grade, Lovell: “I love Woodsmen’s Field Day. My dad helps out with that. I like the logging and skidder events. I hope to enter as a contestant someday!”
Fair to showcase Maine State prison products

BY RACHEL ANDREWS DAMON
SPECIAL TO THE CONWAY DAILY SUN

FRYEBURG, Maine — If you just happened to ask a Mainer where you could buy a great cutting board, they’d likely point you to the Maine State Prison Showroom in Thomaston. That’s where you’ll find some of the finest woodworkmanship anywhere.

Tables, bureaus, cupboards, chairs, toys, salad bowls, birdhouses, jewelry boxes, cornhole boards and about 50 other high quality items are for sale. The workmanship in each piece is made by residents serving sentences at the Maine State Prison located about 4 miles down the road from the Thomaston Showroom in the town of Warren.

The maximum-security prison built in 2001 replaced the original Maine State Prison in Thomaston that was built in 1824. The prison’s capacity: 916 men.

The mission statement of the Maine Department of Corrections reads, “Making our communities safer by reducing harm through supportive intervention, empowering change and restoring lives.” I was able to see the prison’s wood industries operation from the inside and experienced this hopeful mission in action.

Ken Lindsey is industries manager at the Maine State Prison overseeing the woodworking operation. He started as a guard at the facility in 1988. He welcomed my request to visit the prison to highlight one of our most interesting Fryeburg Fair vendors.

The prison sells products at their Thomaston store, Fryeburg Fair and to some vendors in the state. The prison is remotely tucked into rural Maine in the town of Warren. One might expect a Maine prison to be out of the pages of a Stephen King novel, and as it turns out, there is a section of the prison called “the Mile.” Security, of course, is tight. I was given an emergency call device. Lindsey led me down long hallways, behind iron doors and down The Mile. Lots of cement, walls and barbed wire.

Eighty-eight residents of the prison were working in the woodshop on the day of my visit. The workers are maximum, medium and minimum security inmates who have expressed an interest and have a good behavioral record. Lindsey said, “We have some workers doing life and we have some getting out in a year. You won’t be able to tell the difference.”

The shop spans the size of a football field and smells like fresh cedar and sawdust. A multitude of running machines require conversation to be close and loud. The workshop is segmented by task from raw lumber to finished product — cutting, sanding, staining, airbrushing, painting, carving, CNC, plasma cutting, lathe and welding.

Ken Lindsey, Maine State Prison’s Wood Industries manager is seen with a cherry dresser built at the prison. Other items made at the prison include cornhole boards, jewelry boxes, chairs and tables, toys and model ships. (RACHEL ANDREWS DAMON PHOTO)
The entire facility is tidy and well run. Everyone is busy. Experienced workers are training new residents.

Lindsey said, “We’re watching residents learn and gain new skills for when they’re released. For those serving life sentences, this work gives them purpose and a positive focus. We treat each of them as a worker, not an inmate.”

Much of the lumber for building, mostly ash and pine, comes from Maine’s Mountain View Correctional Facility where it is milled. Other woods are procured from various sellers. During COVID, the prison ran out of lumber and had to close down the Thomaston showroom for months. They are in the process of restocking.

Lindsey said: “During COVID when we had no wood coming in, we turned to mask making. The residents made over 225,000 masks and donated them to different veterans homes, schools, and homeless shelters. We went online with other industry managers from around the country to get patterns and figured out how to make them. We turned a negative into a positive and the residents felt very good about that.”

Taxpayer dollars are not used for the wood industries program. It is self-supported by $1.5 million of retail sales annually. The program has benefited from a few substantial donations. Lindsey said, “Doris Buffett, the older sister of Warren Buffett, was a financial supporter through her Sunshine Lady Foundation. She visited the prison a few times prior to her passing in August 2020. We now have a welding program thanks to her. She was a very generous and very nice woman.”

Lindsey said their most popular product is the cutting board. “We sell a ton of them and often can’t keep them in stock at the store. Our cornhole boards are taking off in popularity right now. Especially the ones with the Maine lobster on them.” They are currently working on a big project for an Ellsworth, Maine hotel - 56 bureaus, night stands and chairs.

Residents work with over 10,000 typical woodworking tools which are closely monitored. As we keep moving through departments, Lindsey said, “You’ll see everyone is busy. There is no drama, no arguing. We’re always moving things around for efficiency and better use of space. Residents work from 8-10:30 am and 11:30-3:30 pm. This program helps them get through their sentences. They are able to make some money with this work. We require mandatory savings. Otherwise they can spend their earnings in the commissary and send some home to their families.”

The program at the Maine State Prison has been a very positive example to correctional facilities all over the country. Lindsey credits Commissioner Randall Liberty, Warden Matthew Magnusson and their administrative staff for their support. CBS Sunday Morning recently featured the prison program. After the show aired, tons of emails were received about purchasing items. The retail store does not ship and can’t sell product outside the state. Customers can only visit the Thomaston showroom to make purchases.

Ken Lindsey is proud of the work done on behalf of these men. “This is the best part of the workers’ day. If not, we want to know why. Our residents take pride in their work.

It’s hard to come in and think of what has transpired to get them here. Every day they’re faced with their sentences. We give them positive social behaviors and skills.

The majority of residents don’t come back. They need this chance. They've messed up and know it. Besides woodworking, here at the prison they can get substance abuse and anger management counseling, college classes right up through a master’s degree and opportunities to make personal improvements. In a negative environment we want to be the positive.”

Rachel Andrews Damon is head of publicity and advertising for the Fryeburg Fair.
Harness racing: More than just wagering on horses

Horse racing with pari-mutuel betting has been one of the principal features of agricultural fairs in the state of Maine since 1935.

Fryeburg Fair, held annually in the first week in October, is fortunate in getting many of the better horses in New England because of lack of competition from other tracks this time of year.

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that the money handle at Fryeburg Fair surpasses the per-race handle anywhere in the state. The total bet was over a million dollars for the week for the years 1992-94.

Some years, Fryeburg Fair has close to 10 percent of the entire live handle for the year in the state with a total of 60 races over six days.

Regarding betting, Paul Lusky, consultant for the racing division at the Fryeburg Fair, said, “The basic bet, which is a $2 bet, hasn’t changed in my time, and it probably goes back even further than that. It is not reflective of inflation. I mean a $2 bet today compared to, say, 40 years ago, you are not even beginning to talk the same thing.

“Naturally, you are not limited to betting $2, but the basic bet and return on it for the amount of time (if you wish to bet $2 on an odds-on favorite horse), you might get back $2.40 or $2.60. So, you’d better be getting enjoyment other than what you are receiving for your money,” he said.

“You’ve got to be getting your entertainment enjoyment, which, as I alluded

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to earlier, is a love of the animal, a love of the sport, everything that goes along with it — pageantry, if you will, the ambiance, friendship. It is a lot more than just making money. If you want to make money, you can put your quarter in a slot machine and have instant gratification," Lusky said.

A commercial racetrack has basically one source of revenue for the fair, and that is the revenue from the pari-mutuel wagering and the fair’s cut from that wagering. The fair gets its revenue from many different sources. Racing is just a minor part of it. It used to be about a third: there was always the midway, then ticket sales, and there was racing.

Well, guess what: Campers have pulled in, and now racing is fourth as far as the amount of income it brings in.

Over the week, how many horses do you need? “If we were to have an ideal situation,” said Lusky, “running 60 races in a week, eight horses for each race, 10 races a day for six days, we would need 480 horses. Now, over six days (harness racing takes place at the fair from Tuesday-Sunday) some horses that race on the first day may come back and race again.”

Where do the horses come from? “They come from the Maritime Provinces in Canada, New Brunswick in particular, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. They come from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York State, and there will be a certain amount of ownership that goes farther away,” Lusky said.

“Of course, with our stabling facility, we are able to move some in. The ones that come down from Montreal are coming in just for us. It would be impossible to operate without our stabling system, and each year it becomes more and more imperative that we are able to get facilities for these people who want to come.”

Lusky has become a racing leader in Maine, representing the fair, particularly as far as dealing with the Maine Harness Racing Commission.

“Could he give advice to other fairs?”

“Over a 20-year period, a lot rubs off on you. I try to use very strong business practices. The racing industry historically has been the most loosely managed industry that you can imagine. I think Fryeburg Fair has been on the forefront with commonly accepted business practices.”

After the size of the grandstand was doubled and the betting facilities improved, Wilbur Hammond Jr.

Paul Lusky is a consultant for the racing division at the Fryeburg Fair.