

The first discussion in the paper was as early as **1882**, but it was not until April **1887** that the Fair association was organized. A committee was appointed to plan the rules and by-laws. On this committee were David March, F.M. Wade, Alfred Coolidge, James A. Perkins, C.P. Sullivan and Sid Benton.

The Whitman County Agricultural Fair Association decided that the capital stock would be \$20,000. This would be a sufficient sum to guarantee a park, race course, and buildings that the County would be proud of.

As the summer progressed, plans were made. A bridge was built across the North Palouse River near the fairground, which was located on the north side of the river (not the north side of the Walla Walla highway) about a mile from Colfax. A race track was to be half a mile long. The 14' x 600' stable contained 60 stalls. A reservoir was built in Wood's gulch with pipe laid so the fairground would have a stable water supply.

The first Whitman County Fair opened on October 4, 1887, and lasted for five days. Over 2,000 people enjoyed the exhibits and displays of rare collections, flowers, livestock, harness and saddlery, vegetables, fruits, and needlework.

For many years the Fair was a five-day, October event. In 1888 a special attraction was a balloon ascension a parachute jump.

In **1899** an especially large crowd attended because it was all free.

In **1901**, an excursion train ran from Tekoa for the benefit of all school children in Tekoa, Farmington, Fairfield and Elberton.

In **1903**, the first carnival appeared at the Fair.

In **1905**, there was no Fair because of the Portland Exposition. Horse racing was held instead.

In **1906**, a sprinkling outfit with a gasoline engine was bought for the fairgrounds, Grange exhibits were first shown at the Fair with cash prizes given to the winners.

**1907** brought store closures in Colfax from 1-5 p.m. for the large Fair and horse parade on Friday. Prize winning, locally grown apples were sent to the Boston Fair.

A new feature in **1908** was the WA state College Agricultural Department exhibit of Inland Empire educational trains that had traveled around the area earlier in the season.

Whitman County had an exhibit at the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909. The Whitman County Fair Board was incorporated in July.

In **1910**, the fairgrounds were nearly destroyed by the flood which devastated much of the city. They rebuilt however, "bigger and better than ever!"

W.R. (Rollie) Goodrich lived with his father during the winter of 1910-11 in the quarters occupied during the season by the horse racing trainers and jockeys, while repairing the eight-foot-high wooden fence around the grounds. In the summer, they moved into a tent.

The weekly Commoner reported the grounds were put in perfect condition by **1911**. The wagon roads were covered with straw to prevent dust. The electrical railroad was prepared to run trains either to or from the fairgrounds as needed.

In **1912**, the Colfax uptown attractions divided the Fair. There was dancing every night at the Armory, attractions at the Ridgeway Theater, the Pastime and Bungalow movies had a change of programs. Also, the Parker Carnival Company had many shows and concession on the downtown streets.

Inclement weather forced the Fair \$700 into the red in 1913.

In **1915**, one of the special attractions was balloon racing.

The Fair was held early in **1916** causing a small turn out. The special event was automobile racing. Some of the automobiles in the races were Buick, Dodge, Studebaker and Chalmer models. The purse for the race was \$400. In the years 1915 and 1916, Boys and Girls clubs (the forerunners of 4-H clubs) began to have exhibits in various towns throughout the County with each town furnishing part of the prizes. This caused a splitting of the Whitman County Fair.

In **1917**, L.L. Bruning, Assistant Fair Manager, raised all the money for the youth prizes and got back their exhibits for the Whitman County Fair. The County Commissioners did not contribute because of war conditions. It was decided the youth exhibits and the horse racing would be enough.

Plans for the Whitman County Fair were made in 1918 but a few days before the Fair was supposed to open, the Health Department closed all public meetings because of the flue epidemic. The war years altered the Fair in many ways.

In **1919**, Fair dates were set to be the same as the horse racing circuit. Locally born Hollywood stuntman, Yakima Canutt was featured in a "Wild West" Show. The Fair got off to a bad start when one of the worst dust storms in the year reached its height two hours before the Fair opened. By 1:00 p.m., the air cleared but it was chilly. The only competitive exhibits were those of the Boys and Girls clubs.

In **1920**, the Fair featured a two-day circus held at Colfax Schmuck park and three days of horse racing at the fairgrounds. There were no premiums for the livestock exhibits. Fair attendance and exhibitors were waning.

The business men decided to have a Harvest Carnival instead of a County Fair in **1921**, held the first three days of September. It featured floats from nearly every business house. There was boxing, a style show, baseball as well as a rodeo at the fairgrounds. The lot back of the Colfax Hotel on Mill Street (north of Upton) was cleared and a tent covered the 70' x 140' dance floor. The committee gave away a car valued at \$800. They claimed there were no grafting or outside promoters allowed at the festival. 10,000 people showed up for this event.

In **1922**, the LA LA PALOUSER was held at the Schmuck park with a round up and bucking contest. One of the reasons for the move from the old fairgrounds was dusty roads. The park was located on a paved street. The Commercial Club put up bleachers to hold 4,000 people.

The Boys and Girls Club, which had now become 4-H clubs, had their exhibits with the LA LA PALOUSER in **1923**. There were also community exhibits. The paper spoke about the exhibit from Hubbard, Almota, Thornton, Uniontown, Diamond, South Palouse and the Farm Bureau. It referred to the exhibit hall as the "Hay Palace" but did not say where it was located.

In **1924**, as early as March the farmers asked for a change back to the Whitman County Fair. By May, the County Fair Directors had voted 9 to 2 to move the Fair to Garfield. The State Fair Board endorsed the idea as well. By early July, necessary committees had been appointed. It was voted by local clubs to discontinue the LA LA PALOUSER and everyone was to support the County Fair. The Fair at Garfield was held on October 8-11. Colfax business houses closed for a half day so everyone could attend.

From **1925-1929** the Whitman-Latah Count Fair was held in September at Garfield. The top 4-H exhibits were sent on to the State Fair in Yakima.

**1930** saw a change as Garfield decided to discontinue the fair due to the lack of financial support. The 4-H exhibits continued and were held in Pullman. While the Fair was affected by the 30's depression, the 4-H clubs were able to sponsor small fairs and clubs grew in size.

In **1931 & 1932**, A.F. Harms were the County Extension Agent and Secretary for the Fair. The 4-H exhibits were back in Colfax with the top awards still being sent to the state Fair at Yakima. From there, the top awards were sent to the Chicago Exposition.

Colfax celebrated with a rodeo, pet parade and queen contest in **1933**. The queen contest covered the whole County and forty-three contestants were entered. Mildred Ochs of the Dusty area was selected queen. The fair was held at the "Round Up" grounds which was on the south end of Schmuck Park (presently part of the Colfax High School sports field). The grange booths were under the grandstand and the indoor type exhibits were in the Colfax High School.

This same type of Fair continued on through **1937**, although it was known as just the Fair rather than the Whitman County Fair.

In **1938**, L.L. Burning was elected President of the Fair Board. He, along with the Secretary A.F. Harms and the Fair Board decided a change back to the Whitman County Fair was needed. Letters were sent out to 34 surrounding communities asking for support with a float or truck with an advertising display. Fair buttons were sold by the Grangers and enthusiasm for the Fair grew. It was the first Whitman County Fair since 1929.

It was held at the same Colfax "Round Up" grounds with exhibit places same as in the past. Governor Clarence Martin was asked to speak. Over 4,000 people attended. The rodeo crowd was not to be denied. Two weeks before the fair, they held their celebration which again included the pet parade and the queen contest. Carol (Nolan) Aschinger was chosen to reign as rodeo queen.

These changes created a new interest in the County Fair. At this time the Future Farmers of America (FFA) joined the 4-H groups in entering exhibits.

The Fair continued with the same format from **1939-1941**.

**1942** brought a decline as World War II raged on and gas rationing hampered fair planning and events. Onecho, Belmont, Tekoa, Palouse and Pullman had their own youth fairs. Troy Lindley, of Dayton, became the County Extension Agent.

From **1943 through 1945**, the Fair was held again at Colfax Schmuck park but was listed as a 4-H/FFA fair.

In **1946**, the Fair was back to pre-war strength with 7,500 in attendance at the Schmuck park site.

The Fair continued as before with the exception of a mile-long parade down Colfax Main Street with the Queen and Princesses of the County on decorated floats in the **1947 and 1948**. The first queen of this contest was Patsy Garfield of St. John.

Up to and through **1948**, all Whitman County Fairs had been held on borrowed or rented property. Due to the success and high attendance of the past fair, several communities became interested in finding a permanent fair site- one that was accessible to everyone in the county and large enough to accommodate the fair, race meets, rodeos, livestock sales, horse shows and similar events.

### **1949**

R.H. Morrell, Hugh Huntley and Charles McSweeney found such a site four miles west of Colfax. In April, 1949, 35.22 acres were purchased from Art Jensen. Practically level, the land was all in sod and located at the junction of SR #26 and the Endicott road. The purchased land became county property, managed by the Commissioners, Fair Board and County Extension Agents as advisors.

Planners for the fair were E.W. Foley, President; Bo Henry, Treasurer and Troy Lindley, Secretary, with assistance of Karl Schrenk, Lacrosse; Henry Fisher, Belmont' Allen Manring, Pullman' August Wolf, Tekoa; Bethel Steiger, Diamond Orvin Mikkelsen and R.J. Wride, both of Garfield.

A group called "Fair Boosters" was named to secure funds and support from their communities. Chairman Milt Ensley Sr. was assisted by: Carl Sieveke, Tekoa, John Doneen, Farmington, John Miller, Garfield, Bill Redmond, Palouse, Paul Slusser, Pullman, G.O. Swales, Johnson, Andrew Schulteis, Colton, Herb Camp, Lacrosse, G.J. Aune, Hay, Russell Looney, Penewawa, Roy Jones, Dusty, John Mays, Hooper, James Stetters, Winona, Conrad Hergert, Endicott, Oscar Steiger, Diamond, Ed Hays, St. John, Reser Cochran, Steptoe, Burdette Prince, Thornton, Marvin Jacobs, Rosalia, Sam Banks Oakesdale, Roy Perringer, Belmont, Cliff Tollett, Pine City, Roby Farr, Albion, Wane Baily, Ewan, Charles Shemwell, Almota, Roy Cook, Lamont, A.J. Scholz, Colfax, and Fritz Steiger, Dusty.

Receiving confirmation that Whitman County was one of five fairs to receive state funding support, a local fund drive began to build bleachers, a general exhibit hall, livestock buildings, a water system, sanitation plant and race track.

In August, the first 60' x 100' building with concrete floor was completed (currently the Display Building) which housed commercial exhibits and unique Grange grain mosaics. The Fair was held on the uncompleted grounds with tents and makeshift accommodations. The office was set up in the Colfax Gun Club. The Home Economics exhibits were displayed at the Colfax High School gymnasium with the Flower Show exhibits set up around the swimming pool.

**Fair Queen: Marilyn Wood, Colfax**