

*History of the
Palouse Empire
Fair Snapshot*



1924-1929

From 1924-1929 the Whitman County Fair was held in Garfield Washington.

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.



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.

1951



Another horse barn was built by the Horse Racing Association. A restroom facility was built near the grandstands. More bleaches were added and the Home Economics building was started. When the concrete floor was finished, a dedication and Saturday night dance were held.

The program featured horse shows, chariot races, harness races, a tractor rode and fireworks. Rodeo champion cowboy was Syn Huntley.

Everyone Has a Hand - 1954

A large number of farmers, business, and professional people throughout the County made cash donations during the first two years of the development. All clubs and community members chipped in to continue building the fair. Folk around the county purchased in advance enough ten-year seats in the grandstand to pay for two thirds of its cost.



1956

The first themed fair appeared as “Partners in Progress” A Palouse Empire Kids Day was held with special stunts, races, contests, and calf scramble. Dial telephone systems were demonstrated during the fair. The telephones were scheduled to make their appearances in homes in the spring of 1956.



1957

The centennial anniversary of the National Education Association was observed with local teachers engaged in action with musical numbers and a skit. A new feature was a mule pack race with owners participating. The first “Carson & Barnes Combined Wild Animal Circus” was added to the Thursday lineup. Inland Empire Mother was Ethel Mettler, Colfax, second place was Mrs. Dave Hickman, Palouse.



1963

The first Palouse Empire Farm Family contest was held in 1963, won by the Don Morton family. The Fair became a four-day event with exhibit buildings open and the arena show on Sunday afternoon. Carnival rides were offered through the four days in the midway area. The annual Arena presentation was joined by the Silver Spurs folk dancers of Spokane, professional wrestling and a thrills show.

1968



A “Pink Cow” appeared on the Fair’s publicity posters. This character was created by Whitman County Gazette artist Jerry Jones. The beast originally was intended to spice up the posters for that year. She also made an appearance on the Garfield float and picked up the name of “Patience” from the float designer. The cow has since served as a Fair trademark.

1969

Tents were still in use for the exhibit of fruits, vegetables, and cattle. Plans for a multipurpose building were in discussion. Judging in the Flower division changed from the Standard method of only the first, second, and third Place to the Danish system where all worthy eateries received a placing. The perimeter fence was begun and the ticket gates were moved to a new location.



1970

A concrete sculpture of Patience, the Pink Cow, was designed and constructed by Doris Ensley, Colfax. The indoor arena building was finished with donated funds and labor. A workshop was built for Carroll Lewis, groundskeeper, and part time assistant, Richard Pulis. The usual fair activities were joined by the Old Time Fiddlers, Square Dancers, Idaho Cowboys, and the Harvest Ball. The first Rodeo Queen contest was held by Leslie Shahan crowned as queen for the coming year.



1962. Walsh.

1981

The Threshing Bee was set up for Labor Day before the Fair and also gave a demonstration during the Fair. This procedure carried on through the years. EThis procedure carried on thought eh years. Education demonstrations were in the draft horse area and the new Blacksmith Show was in operation.

1987

On January 26, 1987, the County Commissioners awarded a contract for the demolition of the grandstands. The County used revenue sharing funds to pay of the demolition. The Spokane Grand Prix bleachers were purchased for \$30,000 in August of that year so that there would be seating for fair events.

A \$750 scholarship was awarded to the girl selected as queen with \$300 scholarships for the two queen candidates selected as princesses. All candidates selling booster buttons received 10% of their sales to help cover program expenses

1990

Upon receiving word of a successful application, the museum grant funds (\$25,000) were received from the Washington State Energy office. Remodeling was started in the Multi-Purpose Building for the temporary museum home. Portable horse stalls were rented and set up north of the Indoor Arena barn to accommodate growing 4-H horse entries. Eleven food concessions along with the Ice Cream parlor catered to the public. The First Aid station was set up in a tent with discussion leading through to a future building. Booster button sales were open to civic groups, 4-H clubs as well as the royalty candidates, with a sales percentage for all.

1999

Special Attractions at the fair include a NASCAR Show car Simulator and additional rodeo performance on Friday night. The 50's group the Kingpins, will entertain on Saturday. Th popular Talent show is back for a third year with fantastic amateur talent. Jerry Harris, Master Hypnotist, and Rachel Anderson round out the show!

We can't wait to see what happens next!

