

approaching mass production. Local salesmen for the manufacturers of this equipment seized the opportunity offered by the fairs and began the practice, still continued on a grander scale at the Kentucky State Fair, of exhibiting their wares and taking orders. A binder in operation, a threshing machine driven by steam power were the counterpart, in crowd drawing power, to the auto races and airplane stunts of recent years. Household exhibits-- needle and crochet work, quilts, products of the loom, dairy, and kitchen-- were supplemented by products of the pen, pencil, and brush.

Amusement features grew in variety and attractiveness. Bands, military parades, walking matches, high-wheeled bicycle races, the already familiar merry-go-round or "Flying Jenny," reinforced by a steam calliope, and balloon ascensions vied with the vending of popcorn, candies, brightly-colored whips, caps, gimcracks and knickknacks, soaps, patent medicines, and ice cream. The inevitable basket picnic dinner under the trees, the speeches-- mainly political-- all this and more lent life, color, and variety to the occasion.

Organization of the local fairs continued as late as 1890, but after that year there is no record of further material expansion before the establishment of the Kentucky State Fair. The five-year depression that began in 1893 deflated livestock prices and destroyed, for a time, the market for purebreds. Already badly battered by seventeen years of adverse conditions, and faced by a still more unfavorable future of indefinite duration, the breeders of the State, who had backed the fairs of the 1850's and after, closed the gates of their fairs and bided their time.

By 1900 economic recovery was on its way and interest in the fairs revived; but a blow had been given the old agricultural and mechanical societies from which few of them recovered. The State Department of Agriculture fostered farmers' institutes and farmers' clubs; and fairs sponsored by the Elks and other societies were attempted and for a time proved popular. But the lack of a State-wide rallying point for agriculture was felt by the livestock breeders of all sections of the Commonwealth. Various ways of meeting the situation were considered. The one most favored was to revert to the program of 1856-- a State-sponsored traveling fair, moving from district to district within the Commonwealth, under immediate direction of able agricultural leaders representative of all sections and interests within the State. The manufacturers of Louisville pledged their support to such a program, and, in 1901, with such purpose in mind, the Kentucky Livestock Breeders' Association, a society having State-wide membership, was created.

THE STATE FAIR IS ORGANIZED

The first Kentucky State Fair was held on the Churchill Downs racecourse in Louisville in the early autumn of 1902. The most recent of record is that of 1941. Between these two dates lies colorful history covering four distinct administrative periods: (1) that of 1902-5, during which the fairs were under the control and management of the Kentucky Livestock Breeders' Association; (2) the fairs of 1906-11, when the management was in the hands of a board chosen by the farmers of the State through the farmers' institutes of that day; (3) the fairs of 1912-38, during which period the management was vested in an agricultural board appointed by the governor which had as one of its duties the holding of the State Fair; and (4) the period, which began in 1938, of control by a State Fair board, within but structurally distinct from that of the existing agricultural board.