

## RENSSELAER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

. RENSSELAER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY - As early as the year 1818 the subject of organizing a County Agricultural Society engaged the attention of the farmers and other persons interested in the products of the soil. Early in the summer of 1819 a notice was inserted in the village newspapers that a meeting would be held on June 3, in the courthouse to take into consideration the organization of such a society. On the day fixed, a respectable number of the leading men of the county interested in farming assembled and adopted a constitution and elected officers.

The following persons were elected, President---George Tibbets; First Vice President, Simon Newcomb Jr; Third Vice President, Edmund C. Genet; Treasurer, Philip Heartt; Corresponding Secretary, George Davis; Recording Secretary, Henry Hogle.

At a second meeting July 14, 1819, the following board of managers were elected: TROY ---John P. Cushman, Hugh Peebles, Thomas Clowes, Thomas Turner, Stephen V.R. Schulyer, Stephen Ross.

LANSINGBURGH -- Jacob C. Lansing, Wooster Brookins, Smith German.

BRUNSWICK -- Asa Gardner, Samuel I. McChesney, Martin Springer.

SCHAGHTICOKE -- Bethel Mather.

PITTSTOWN -- Michael S. Vandercook

HOOSICK -- Moses Warren, John C. Carpenter

PETERSBURGH -- Joseph Case

GRAFTON -- Zilba Hewitt

BERLIN -- Barton Hammond

STEPHENTOWN--Henry Platt

SAND LAKE -- William Carmichael

GREENBUSH -- John Breese

SCHODACK--Cornelius I. Schermerhorn

NASSAU -- Fenner Palmer

The Rensselaer County Agricultural Society held its first County Fair October 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> 1819 on the common south of Hoosick Street and east of River Street. Each day the ringing of bells and the discharge of cannon ushered the new day in. A procession was formed at the courthouse on the first day of the fair, at 9 o'clock. The members

marched to the common where the fair was held. As described by a Troy newspaper, the fair was a great success. It says:

"In the interior a very large collection of rival farmers had arrived on the ground and bro't with them the best cattle of the county ---exhibiting the intresting spectacle of the finest oxen, cows, bulls, calves, sheep, swine, horses, colts, with their dams, & engaging the curiosity and employing the observation of both practical men and amateurs. \

At 4:00 o'clock P.M. the ploughing match took place and for novelty and effect proved it's self most interesting. The crowd large, ~~it was~~ between 3 or 4,000, people occupying the adjacent eminences (site) and pressing in upon the ground designated for the interesting strife. (Contest)

In 30 minutes the quick moving tea of Mr. Filkin completed its quarter of an acre of unusually tough award, (ploughing the soil) amid the shouts of the spectators. A minute more brought in the cattle of Mr. Herrington, who received the premium, (prize) having turned up the award (soil) both deeper and better than his swifter competitor.

On the second day the society again formed at the flagstaff, accompanied by the clergy of the city and neighboring towns, under the direction of the Marshal Col. Knickerbacker, Assistant Marshal Gen. Carr and escorted by the fine company from the United States Arsenal, commanded by Lieutenants. Morton and Walker, preceded by the excellent band. The procession ~~in~~ moved down River and First Streets to the Presbyterian meeting house, where had assembled a large audience of females from the city and county. The services at the church were commenced by an appropriate ode sung by the choir under the direction of Mr. Hastings. The prizes, which had been awarded by the committee, were then announced after remarks by Elkanah Watson Esq.. A prayer by the Rev. Mr. Sommers concluded the services at the church"

The Rensselaer County Agricultural Society after many years of holding annuls fairs in at different towns disbanded October 1874.

*Zilba Hewitt*

Sand Lake has link with Elkanah Watson he was one of the original stockholders in the Rensselaer Glass Factory; he is also credited with holding the first fair. He lived in Berkshire County and wanted to show ~~his~~ sheep, he was proud off. He brought them to town common, other farmers ~~and~~ brought livestock they were proud of. They did this each year and the county fair was born

On page 32 of the book "A Resourceful People" published by the Rensselaer County Historical Society is a photograph of the membership certificate of ~~one~~ of ~~my~~ Great, Great Grandfathers Zilba Hewitt in the County Agricultural Society. As long as I can remember this certificate and the pewter cup he won were in ~~one~~ of my Grandfathers glass cabinets. I always wanted hold those interesting objects, Grandfather's reminder look but don't touch. Was always there.

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