Early Fairs and Festivals

At least since Biblical times people have enjoyed displaying and viewing agricultural products. This custom continues in our fairs and festivals which today include not only agriculture but also many other fields of endeavor.

The fair or festival is not a recent development in Louisiana. For example, the Mechanics and Agricultural Fair Association of Louisiana, which was incorporated in 1861, sponsored several "grand state fairs" from 1866 until 1873, offering over $20,000 in prizes in the latter year. The Louisiana State Fair, incorporated in 1877, succeeded to the rights of Mechanics Fair. In 1905, it took the name, "State Fair of Louisiana", the name it continues to hold today.

The Catalog and Premium List of the State Fair for 1906 lists 18 community and parish fairs being held the same year. Since 1906 there has been a substantial increase in the number of fairs in Louisiana; a reported seventy-seven fairs and festivals are to be held in this state in 1956-1957.

It is these present fairs and festivals with which the succeeding portions of this report deal.

Present Fairs and Festivals

The fairs and festivals of Louisiana have been called "the most unique and the greatest in number in any state." In view of the diverse character and the large number, certain questions come to mind regarding matters such as the purpose, types, number, name, location, and growth of these fairs and festivals.

A. Purpose

The purposes of fairs and festivals vary from one to another—some are for the benefit of one particular parish; others for the enjoyment of a certain community; one honors rice; another celebrates the shrimp; another pays tribute to the forest. But there are purposes
Present Fairs and Festivals

A. Purpose

which are common to most if not all fairs and festivals. These are:
1. To educate the citizenry
2. To encourage agricultural, dairy, livestock, and natural resource production.
3. To publicize and promote products
4. To afford opportunities for recreation
5. To promote the welfare and progress of the state

B. Types of Fairs and Festivals

To achieve these purposes, several different types of celebrations have developed in Louisiana, including the general groups listed below.

1. Community- a fair held by the people of a given community.
2. Parish- a fair which excludes the entire parish rather than one community.
3. Joint Parish- a fair in which more than one but not more than three parishes participate. (The Commissioner of Agriculture and Immigration has required, under the authority given him by Act 611 of 1952, that not more than three parishes participate in a joint fair to be eligible to receive state funds).
4. Area- a fair in which a geographical section of the state participates.
5. Product Festival- a festival which is devoted to a certain product, usually animal, plant, or mineral.
6. State- a fair in which the entire state participates.

C. Increasing Number

The number of fairs and festivals in Louisiana has shown a marked increase from 1910 in which there was only one incorporated fair, the State Fair, to today with 68 such fairs. It is true that State Fair records for 1906 indicate that some 18 community and parish fairs were being held that year; however, 1910 records do not indicate they were incorporated fairs at that time. Although other fairs and festivals may perhaps be able to point to activities at an earlier date, the State Fair was the first of the fairs presently active to incorporate.

Two fairs- The Point Coupee Fair and The South Louisiana State Fair- were incorporated in 1914. One fair was incorporated in 1915; one in 1917 and six in the nineteen twenties. No fairs were incorporated during the depression of the nineteen thirties. Six fairs were incorporated in the late thirties and four just prior to the Second World War. The years 1945-49 saw the incorporation of some 17 fairs. The biggest year in the growth of fairs was 1950 when not less than 16 were incorporated. This was followed by 7 incorporations in 1951; 2 in 1952 and 3 in 1953.
Present Fairs and Festivals

D. Number, Names and Location

The Department of Agriculture and Immigration, in its calendar called "Dates of Louisiana Fairs and Festivals" lists a total of seventy-seven fairs and festivals to be held in Louisiana during 1951-55.

At least sixty parishes of Louisiana have either a parish fair or a joint-parish fair. There are a total of forty-two parish fairs and six joint-parish fairs. There are five community fairs, seven area fairs, and seventeen product festivals. In addition there are the State Fair at Shreveport and The State Negro Fair at New Orleans.
FESTIVAL TIME THROUGHOUT LOUISIANA

In Louisiana, where celebration is a tradition, festival time is always just around the bend of the bayou.

More than 100 celebrations, parish (counties in other states) wide, state wide or regional, dot the state, from the rose-covered delta to the south to the rolling red hills to the north.

Although strikingly different in outward appearance, all reflect the common heritage of Louisiana, brought by the conquistadores of Spain, the cavaliers of France and the adventure-bound nobles of Great Britain. The heritage emerges as a Gallic joie de vivre, a basic and innate love to celebrate.

In the following text you, the reader, will have your first glimpse at what any Louisiana native will tell you should be standard fare in any lifetime—in annual doses. Read this account and prepare yourself for a round of festivities in a setting which combines the best of the Old World and the energy and zest of the new.

You can take your choice from a selection of festivities as varied as the state which gave them birth. If seafood is your dish, then have it in styles—at the Blessing of the Shrimp Fleet in maritime Morgan City.

Or perhaps it's the wide-open, robust type of outdoors fun you crave. If it is, try the Forest festival at Winnfield, where men who have made lumberjacking an art compete before a backdrop of some of the finest timberland in the nation.

It makes little difference what goes to make up a vacation for you—you'll find it in Louisiana. Why not plan now to visit?
Present Fairs and Festivals

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Cotton Festival

A newcomer to the festival scene, the Louisiana Cotton Festival, makes its bid this year in Ville Platte on Sept. 25-26 to become one of the more popular fiestas.

Re-organized only recently, the Cotton Festival visitors will be treated to the "Tournel," which is a revival of an ancient sport, popular in France, and brought to Ville Platte nearly 150 years ago by an officer in Napoleon's army.

The game consists of mounted horsemen, armed with lances, racing around a tight circular track around which are suspended small iron rings. These horsemen see which of them can pierce the rings with their lances in the shortest possible time.

In other events at the Cotton Festival, Louisiana's Queen of Cotton will be selected and a gigantic water show is scheduled.

Sept. 25-26--- Louisiana Cotton Festival, Ville Platte. (E. Harned Guillory, P.O. Box 563, Ville Platte.)

Cotton is always king in Autumn when Tallulah fêtes the coming-of-age of this traditional Southern crop.
Dairy Festival

Abbeville - October

In the heart of some of Louisiana's finest rice and dairy country, Abbeville celebrates each year with its Dairy Festival, to begin this year on Oct. 15.

In a background of sleek and productive milk herds, participants in this year's events will be treated to parades, horse and cattle shows, milk and butter churning contests and a baby show.

Noted for its French atmosphere, the city annually plays host to Wisconsin's nationally famed "Alice in Dairyland" during the fest. Louisiana Traveler, Apr. 16, Sept. 1958, p. 3

On October 16-17 the annual Dairy Festival and Fair of the state will be held in friendly Abbeville. Louisiana Traveler, Apr. 16, Sept. 1958, p. 4

Oct. 16-17—Louisiana Dairy Festival, Abbeville, (P.O. Box 25, Abbeville.)

To commemorate Louisiana's rapid rise as a dairyland, Abbeville yearly sets aside two days for its Dairy Festival during the month of October.

Sleek and productive milk herds vie for attention at this unusual festival with milking and churning contests, greased pig and pole-climbing competitions.

On the agenda, too, for the Dairy Festival are horse shows, parades, baby contests, and exhibits of the state's agricultural and dairying activities.

Abbeville is the home of America's largest rice millers and is equally noted for its markedly French influence. Today Vermilion Parish, which houses the community, contains the largest population of Acadians in the state.

A feature of the festival is the reception of Wisconsin's dairy queen and ambassador of good will, Alice in Dairyland. (L.A. Land of Festivals, 1958, p. 3)
Dairy Festival

One of the youngest and liveliest of Louisiana's fall festivals is the Dairy Festival, at Abbeville, scheduled this year for Sept. 21-22. Approximately $1,000 will be awarded this year for dairy cattle and dairy products. Two parades will be held each day, in addition to milking and butter churning contests, bicycle races, a football game and band festival, and numerous other events. Festival officials expect attendance to top the 50,000 persons attending last year's celebration.

Highlight for the festival will be the crowning of a new queen to replace the present queen, Barbara Ferron of Ville Platte. Queen Barbara of Fairystand, a school teacher, recently was named alternate to the National Butter Queen at Chicago.

Symbolic of the coming festival is the "1951 Dairy Baby," pent Carla Marie Gary of Lafayette.

Louisiana News Digest, Sept. 1951.
The picturesque Louisiana town of Opelousas stresses the contribution of the Golden Yam to Louisiana's economy each year when it stages the explosive Yambilee, usually in October.

Glittering floats, elaborate pageants, agricultural exhibits and other festivities make Opelousas Louisiana's focal point during the three-day festival.

Opelousas dates its Yambilee back to 1946, when businessmen of the area decided to do something about publicising the Yam, which had done so much to improve the lot of the farmers of the area.

Today, the festival attracts some 50,000 visitors yearly, with a calendar of events which include the selection of the Yam Queen, parades, and other attractions.

The town is located near the northern boundary of Louisiana's Acadian country, and offers visitors the added attraction of a base of operations for sightseeing throughout the Teche Country, to a large degree, for the survival of many of Louisiana's quaint customs.

Young Queen Marigold, child ruler of the Yambilee, and her princesses can hope to be adult rulers of some Louisiana festival a decade hence.

**Louisiana News Digest**, October, 1950.

Visitors to the Louisiana Yambilee this year will be greeted by aerial fireworks and the arrival of Mr. Yam, symbol of the industry, on October 19. Ceremonies at the Yamatorium, parades, an open air festa and the unmasking of Mr. Yam—on Yamatage, of course,—take place on the first day.

On the 26th, the Grand Parade of the Yambilee features scores of glittering floats, hundreds of pretty girls and the Queen of the Yambilee. Closing ceremonies last year were held at the local high school football game, when between halves the ceremonies were entitled, "Goodbye, Mr. Yam."

**Louisiana News Digest**, December, 1950.
The ever-growing, popular Yambilee opens in Opelousas on Oct. 5, as the area honors Louisiana's sweet potato industry.

A fairly new festival, the Yambilee had its beginning in 1946 when a group of businessmen decided to pay homage to the yam which had done so much to benefit farmers and the economy of Louisiana.

One of the first festivals to reveal plans for theming the Yambilee around the Acadian migration, this year's events will be centered around the 200th anniversary of the migration of the Acadian to Louisiana from Nova Scotia.

Events at the Yambilee include parades, selection of a Queen and Court, horse show, dancing and agricultural exhibits. "Louisiana Traveler," Vol. 11, No. 5, September 1950, p. 3

Oct. 5-7—Louisiana Yambilee, Opelousas (A. F. Watkins, Opelousas) 8 p. 4

On October 6 the rollicking Yambilee begins in Opelousas, center of Louisiana's yam producing country. "Louisiana Traveler," Vol. 11, No. 5, September 1950, p. 4, col. 1

On October 6, the growing Yambilee will begin in Opelousas. A fairly new festival, the Yambilee had its beginning in 1946 when a businessman of the area made the remark that something should be done to publicize and honor the yam, which had done so much to benefit farmers and economy in Louisiana. Since the beginning of the event it has enjoyed tremendous success.

Fair officials anticipate 50,000 visitors for this year's celebration. Parades, beauty contests, exhibits and dancing are in store for the Yambilee visitor. "Louisiana Traveler," Vol. 11, No. 5, September 1950, p. 4, col. 3-4

Held annually at Opelousas, this festival pays homage to yams, one of the state's most important crops. See All of Louisiana, All Year 'Round, p. 25

Or take sweet potatoes, in whose honor the annual Yambilee is held at Opelousas, scheduled for Oct. 15-19 this year. Louisiana leads the United States in sweet potato production by harvesting about 14 per cent of the national yam crop each year.

With the ending of the fifth annual Louisiana Orange Festival at Buras last month, the bountiful harvest festival in the state subsided for another year. Next on the agenda of Louisiana attractions will be the "early spring" flower shows beginning this month and the Mardi Gras celebrations scheduled for early February.

Celebrating an estimated $1½ million crop this year, the Orange Festival on the bank of the Mississippi River below New Orleans drew an official attendance of some 5,000 citrus lovers.

Leading the festivities were the Orange Queen Janice Parker, 16, year-old Port Sulpher student, and her king, U.S. Rep. F. Edward Hbert. They were crowned by last year's king of the festival, Leander R. Perez, district attorney for Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes.

Following both judging in the morning and a noon banquet, a two-block-long parade wended its way through Buras to the football field for the Orange Festival high school grid classic.

The Anthony Commander display was awarded first place in the citrus growers' booth competition, the third first prize won by Commander in four attempts. Theme of the exhibit, which displayed orange wine, cakes, candies and other citrus products, was "Louisiana Citrus Products for Christmas!"

The fast growing Louisiana Orange Festival, held annually at Buras on the banks of the Mississippi River below New Orleans, will be staged on December 10 this year.

Pretty and dark-haired Janice Parker, 16, of Port Sulpher, was selected last month at Buras to reign as this year's queen.

The festival eulogizes the Louisiana naval orange, which through impartial tests has proved to be preferred over California, Florida, and Texas oranges for flavor and taste appeal.

Festival officials have invited prospective visitors to see the $1½ million harvest of 750,000 boxes of fruit and try the tantalizing orange wine which packs 18 per cent volume punch.

Movie star Leo Carillo receives a sample of Louisiana citrus products and orange wine from the 1949 Orange Queen, Margaret Gustafson of Buras, at this year's Yambilee.
Orange Festival (continued)

Louisiana oranges, an industry which brings the state over a million dollars yearly under normal conditions, was scheduled to begin moving to market Oct. 1, it was announced recently by Dr. E. H. Slater, New Orleans, President of Louisiana Citrus Growers.

Plans for inspection and maturity tests at shipping points were worked out at a meeting of the directors of the association with Commissioner of Agriculture W. E. Anderson at the state capitol Sept. 15.

"The maturity test will assure edibility of the fruit, since only those oranges passing the test will be shipped," Slater said.

Louisiana's orange output this year is expected to approximate 600,000 boxes, each of one and two-fifths bushels capacity, Slater said. Louisiana's orange-growing area is restricted for the most part to the Plaquemines parish area.

If you want a fight on your hands, friend, just drop a hint to a Plaquemines Parish orange grower that Louisiana Sweets aren't so sweet after all. If the citrus man can control himself he will show you "proof positive" that Louisiana oranges are far and away the sweetest in the world — and that includes California and Florida, too.

As William Bishop puts it, "we don't care where you go, we don't care what oranges you eat or what orange juice you drink, nowhere else in the world is there an orange raised that is superior to the Louisiana orange grown in Plaquemines Parish".

Right now would be a particularly bad time for anyone to question the superiority of the Louisiana orange, for Plaquemines citrus growers are about to begin celebration of a record-breaking crop with their fourth annual Orange Festival.

Scheduled for December 4 at Buras, festival activities will include the judging of citrus exhibits, speeches by Commissioner of Agriculture W. E. Anderson and Judge Emmanuel Perez, a "Little Orange Bowl" football game, coronation of the King and Queen and the Orange Festival Ball.

(continued next page)
So go on now and meet the hospitable and friendly people of Plaquemines Parish, see the celebration of the 750,000-box, $1.5 million orange industry, taste the wonderful orange wine which packs and is per cent volume punch. But remember, Louisiana Sweets are the sweetest in the nation.

The Bures citrus festival marks the harvest of a crop famous for its beauty, quality, and flavor. (See All of Louisiana, All Year-Round, p. 28)