

Fairs and Festivals of many Western Cities and Towns



THE BEST CROP IN THE WEST COAST—ITS GIRLS



PEANUTS AND POPCORN



IN THE PARADE JOHN L. COWAN - DENVER



ORANGE BALL AT PASADENA'S TOURNAMENT OF ROSES ON NEW YEAR'S DAY



PUMPKIN PIES AT LONGMONT



SERVING LUNCH AT GREELY



WATCHING THE "DOINGS"



IN THE PIE DAY PARADE



AN AIRSHIP IN PASADENA'S TOURNAMENT OF ROSES



IN THE BIG SWIMMING POOL AT GLENWOOD SPRINGS ON STRAWBERRY DAY

By John L. Cowan

THROUGHOUT the wide world the harvest time is a season of rejoicing, and its close is marked by a holy day or a holiday—depending upon whether the people are worldly or devout. No doubt man's oldest festival is the harvest home. It antedates Christmas and even the pasover and goes back to the first farmer, who must have rejoiced when he had stored away sufficient food to last him through the barren months that he knew were coming.

But the true American "harvest home" is not known by that name and is rarely thought of as having that significance. It's the county fair. Perhaps you may not, at first thought, agree with this conception of what we are accustomed to regard as a peculiarly American institution. Give the matter a moment's thought and you will admit that the fair is a crystallization of the sentiment of harvest time. The sentiment is as widespread as humanity, but every nation has its own spontaneous method of giving it expression.

The exigencies of horse racing, amusement enterprises and various sports interfere to some extent with the natural adjustment of fair season. Two or three or a half dozen counties usually arrange a fair circuit, each town having a fair ground and association holding its annual exhibition and festival on a date that will not conflict with any other. This makes it possible for the same people to attend as many fairs as they may desire, for the same livestock and machinery exhibitors to move their exhibits to every fair in the circuit; in fact, for the same horses to run on every race track and for the same fakers to "work" the rural populace of many neighborhoods. But it makes the true nature of the county fair as a harvest festival a little less obvious. Sometimes it comes at a time that is rather inopportune for the farmer, when he must, perforce, attend to the more pressing business of getting in his crops. Such fairs are necessarily more or less complete failures. But if the most important of the products of the surrounding farms have been gathered, wild horses would not hold the farmer at home on fair day. He is

filled with the spirit of good will if his crops have been even moderately bountiful. He takes pride in placing the fairest of his fruits, the choicest of his grains and the finest of his livestock on exhibition, and he has a vast curiosity to see whether his neighbors have been able to do as well as he. His barns are full and his pockets are far from empty, so he spends his money with a prodigality that he would never dream of in winter time, when it's all outgo and no income, or in the spring time, when his barn and granary are sadly depleted and when it is more or less problematical whether he will reap where he has sown or not.

Among primitive races the harvest festivals are always of a religious character—a thanksgiving to the gods for their bounty. This was the origin of the fairs of Europe in the middle ages, but gradually the element of worship at European fairs died out, or was crowded out by the instinct for trade. At first the traders, merchants, all who had anything for sale or who wished to buy, attended the fairs because they knew a vast concourse of people would be there, attracted by the religious ceremonies. As the religious sentiment that inspired these fairs in the beginning died away the spirit of commercialism gained the ascendancy, and the people continued to assemble long after the religious occasion had been forgotten.

America never had religious fairs of this kind. The first fairs in this country were instituted about 100 years ago as a stimulus to agricultural endeavor, as a means of educating the tillers of the soil to strive for better crops and greater yields. They grew in popular favor more as amusement enterprises than anything else. The harvest spirit is a spirit of rejoicing. The farmer has worked hard, and has received his reward. Now he is in for a good time. He wants to enjoy himself. Only in so far as the fair helps along this worthy end does it fulfill its destiny and justify itself in the opinion of those that attend. It isn't that the American farmer is irreligious that he has thus lost sight of the religious element of the festival of the harvest. Far from it. The religious phase of the harvest sentiment finds expression at Thanksgiving time or in formal "harvest home" celebrations in the church. At the fair the farmer wants a holiday. He has earned it by

the sweat of his brow and the labor of his hands.

This is a big country and in some part of it the harvest is in progress every month of the year. So it is not strange that the first of the harvest festivals take place on New Year's day. That is Pasadena's annual tournament of roses. From a 10 minutes' inspection of the street parade one can tell with absolute certainty whether the orange crop of the San Gabriel valley is a phenomenal success or a dismal failure. The golden orange is the real occasion for the tournament of roses—just as it is of the floral fiestas of Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Diego and other towns in the great thermal belt of California. These are not fairs, of course, but they fulfill precisely the same office on the west coast—from San Diego to Portland—that the county fairs of the eastern states fulfill where they are the fashion. They give expression to the harvest time sentiment.

When the last of the floral fiestas have been held Fresno comes to the fore with its Raisin day. However, it must be confessed that the spirit of commercialism is rather more evident in Raisin day than in the more spontaneous harvest festivals of California and other states. Fresno is not content to invite the world to that bustling town in the San Joaquin valley to eat raisins and have a good time. Oh, no; Fresno wants every family in America to make it a point to eat raisins on that particular day. If the whole country can be educated to respect Fresno's modest wish a shortage in the country's raisin production will at once be evident and the price of raisins will soar.

To the same purpose San Diego advocates an orange day, when every individual in America is expected to eat at least one orange. If San Diego and Fresno prove successful we may expect an indefinite extension of this method of exploitation. San Jose may come to the fore with a prune day, the goober states with a peanut day, Delaware with a peach day, Maryland an oyster day, Rhode Island a clam day and so on ad infinitum.

Of a very different character are the fete days of the Rocky mountain west. These are true harvest home festivals each timed to occur when the typical and most important production of the neighborhood is at its best. There is nothing of barter and trade or of com-

mercialism or ax grinding about them, but everybody goes to have a good time and to help everybody else have a good time. And, of course, "having a good time" involves having plenty to eat—for who can be happy or jolly on an empty stomach?

The typical western fete days have all been described so often that a detailed account of the various festivities would hardly be in order. Glenwood Springs leads off in June with its annual Strawberry day—the strawberry reaching an unrivaled perfection of form, size and flavor in that particular corner of Colorado. After every one has eaten all the strawberries and cream that he or she has capacity for, a general invitation is extended to take a bath in the big swimming pool, supplied with hot water from the hot springs to which the town owes its name. This is no reflection upon the habits of cleanliness of the guests of the community, but simply a wish to share with all comers the best the town affords. Strawberry day comes opportunely in the month of weddings, and every loving couple in that part of the Rocky mountains makes it a point to have their wedding take place in Glenwood Springs on that auspicious occasion.

Gunnison makes merry with an an-

nual fish fry and Idaho Springs with a venison day. Rocky Ford, America's most famous cantaloupe producing district, has its melon day, where watermelons and cantaloupes in unlimited quantities cause the hearts of more than darkies to rejoice. Greeley, where the world's greatest potato fields are found, has its yearly potato roast and hay palace, and Loveland serves the great American specialty, green corn, in its most seductive flavor at its annual corn roast. Longmont's pumpkin pie day is famous wherever the pies "that mother used to make" are known, and Grand Junction's peach day makes one's mouth water even to think of it, for no other region grows peaches quite as good as those of the western slope. Brighton's tomato battle is spectacular rather than appetizing, although the wants of the inner man are not neglected after the gory contest with ripe, red tomatoes has been fought to a finish.

These special days do not exhaust the fair of the west by any means. Pueblo has the state fair of Colorado, Sacramento the state fair of California and Albuquerque the territorial fair of New Mexico, and scores of other towns have the regulation county fairs such as may be seen in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont or any other staid and

conventional community of the east. Wyoming's great three days' celebration takes the form of its "Frontier Days," in which the wild west is again reconstituted. In this the harvest home motif is not evident, for the harvest of scalps was garnered decades ago. Traveling farther east, the little town of Ackley, Ia., produces something unique in its annual Sauerkraut day, held in September. Last year several thousand people attended, consuming 15 barrels of odoriferous kraut and 1,200 pounds of piping hot wieners. After this let no one deny the right of sauerkraut and wieners to stand beside pumpkin pie, Thanksgiving turkey and buckwheat cakes on the list of typical national delicacies. In Rhode Island and other states of New England there are clam bakes and similar festivities into which a good deal of the harvest spirit of good cheer and free handed liberality is infused. However, as a rule the harvest festivals of the east are conventionalized and stereotyped into the regulation county fair, with little of individuality to distinguish one community from the other.

Even among the Indians the fair seems to have taken hold. The Crowes of Montana hold an industrial fair annually in sight of the historic battlefield of the Little Big Horn, where Custer and his brave men fell 23 years ago. Of course there are Indian dances and tribal ceremonies, but the exhibits of livestock, cereals and other products of the farms would be creditable in any agricultural community of the east. The first fair of the Crow tribe was held in 1894, and every year since has increased in interest and importance, until it is now attended by representatives of many tribes and is a

real factor in the civilizing of the red men of the northwest.

None of the other tribes has yet adopted the fair, but all have their harvest festivals, which have descended to them from immemorial antiquity. These are of religious purport, for the propitiation of the gods, and in thanksgiving for the fruits of the fields. Among the most famous of these aboriginal harvest festivals are those celebrated by the Pueblos of Taos, Isleta and Acoma, in which dancing, racing, pole climbing and feasting are the conspicuous features.

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