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## Pickaway County Fair: Mounds of excitement

7/8/2013

By Lind Van Slyke  
Photo courtesy of



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It is difficult to truly understand the nature of any particular fair without also understanding the uniqueness of its surrounding region.

Pickaway County, Ohio is part of the Columbus Metropolitan Area. The name "Pickaway" was derived from the Pekowi band of Shawnee Indians that flourished there during the 18th century.

According to the 2000 Census, less than 1% of the county's current population is Native American. Nevertheless, the area is still renowned for the ancient mounds that remain a testament to all that came before.

Along with numerous other places on the National Register of Historic Places, Pickaway County is home to five such Native American sites: Arledge Mounds I and II (one five feet high, the other 20), W. C. Clemmons Mound (22 feet high, almost entirely circular), Horn Mound (near a stream which may threaten to erode it), Luther List Mound (conical with a 75-foot diameter), and the Tick Ridge Mound

District (650 acres).

Wikipedia explains that all of these mounds are thought to "have been built by people of the Adena culture." This was a "Pre-Columbian Native American culture that existed from 1000 to 200 BC, in a time known as the Early Woodland period." Timemaps.com tells us that this time period overlaps with that of Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome - as well as with that of Babylon, Minoa, and the Israelites.

These mounds, which "once numbered in the hundreds," are thought to have served as "burial structures, ceremonial sites, historical markers and possibly gathering places." The ones that remain in Pickaway County have been mostly undisturbed by human hands for all these years, which greatly distinguishes them as potential archaeological treasures.

However, not all of Pickaway's treasures are from the past. Many are currently very much alive and growing. Topping this modern-day list is the Pickaway County Fair.

This year's fair got off to an exciting start with weekend Grandstand Harness Racing. Admission was free to this crowd-pleasing event, aspects of which included "starting gate, photo finish, and pari-mutuels." Saturday's

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purse was \$850, and Sunday's were \$600 and \$500.

Another Grandstand kick-off feature was the Circleville Pumpkin Show Band. The Circleville Pumpkin Show, with roots that stretch back to 1903, was integrally tied to the Pickaway County Fair this year. A look at the fair's website Home Page reveals a photo of the Pumpkin Show float that won third-place.

This October 2012 float was an ingenious way of advertising the 2013 fair months in advance to a "singing-to-the choir" type of crowd. According to the fair's Facebook page, the float's theme was "Sow it, Grow it, Show it." This was exemplified by the presence of a very large pumpkin (hooked to an IV tube, no less) alongside the 2012 Fair Queen and her First Attendant - plus a huge sign listing fair sponsors and

proclaiming the upcoming 2013 dates.

By no means was this the only effective marketing that was done. Sarah Few, Fair Secretary, said, "It was probably our radio ads that were our biggest advertising expense this year. The directors wanted to do that, and we think it really helped."

Another marketing strategy that turned out to be a win-win for local populations and the fair was the scheduling of a Tuesday Senior Citizens Day and a Wednesday Kids Day.



During Senior Citizens Day, admission was only \$2.00 for those 60 and over. This low fee included the opportunity for vital health screenings (cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, spine, hearing) - and even a free lunch (whoever said there's no such thing). It also included entertainment such as the Pickaway Senior Center Fun Bunch Cloggers (that's a mouthful) and the Christian Chicks. Nursing home residents also enjoyed this wonderful day out at the fair.

Sarah Few reported that on Kids Day "the rides opened an hour earlier at noon." She added, "Anyone 16 and under got into the gates free that day, and a \$10 wristband got you unlimited rides for five whole hours." There were many kid-friendly events, including the National Kiddie Tractor Pull at the Grange Building and Kids Entertainment at the Midway Stage.

Another promotional strategy was the Fairtastic Lunch deal. Sarah Few explained that on Monday through Saturday "you could pay \$5 to get into the fair from 11 AM to 1 PM." You could therefore come in during your lunch hour, get something good to eat, get a whiff of the fair excitement, and realize that you've just got to come back again soon. Meanwhile, if you left before 1 PM on that same day, you could have even gotten your \$5 admission back.

Sarah Few also said that regular gate admission was \$5 for anyone 10 and older, and free for those who were younger.

The Facebook page states that \$13 was the price of an exhibitor's pass, which admitted you to the fair every day and allowed you to place entries in the open shows.

For two extra dollars you could have instead bought a \$15 membership pass, which additionally allowed you to "vote for your Senior Fairboard Directors." The fair is operated by the Pickaway County Agricultural Society, a nonprofit organization that engages in creative fundraising throughout the year (such as renting out RV and boat storage spaces during the winter).

The Midway was provided by Triple Treat Shows of Cincinnati. Sarah Few reported, "This was our third year with them. I would say that they had 20 to 25 rides. The Hurricane was one of the really popular ones. Younger kids especially liked the slides and the Ferris Wheel."

Popular Midway entertainment included the First Annual Pickaway Idol. You guessed it - it was a singing contest modeled after American Idol. Ms. Few reported, "We had a really good turnout of people coming to watch... which we were happy about since this was only the first year we tried it."

It is obvious that Pickaway County's creative history still remains very much intact.



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