

FAIR SEEKING PHOTOS FROM FAIRS PAST

by Amy Davis

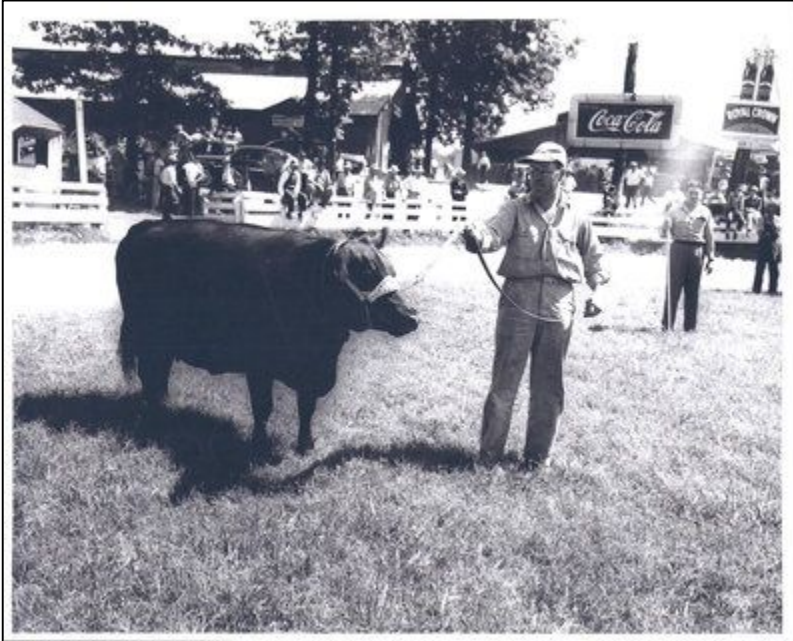
Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

6 February 2014

This image from Sept. 9, 1949, captures Clarence Bartlett proudly displaying his lowline cow in the Putnam County fair arena, then located on Maple Avenue and Fourth Street. Putnam County Archives

PUTNAM COUNTY — They were the fairs of Putnam's past.

Simpler times when locals delighted in showing off the best of their bounty — everything



from prized chickens to canned tomatoes to apple pies.

Long ago... but maybe not so different from today.

After all, the blue ribbon has yet to lose its appeal. And plenty — adults and children alike — continue to apply for it each summer at the Putnam County Agricultural and Industrial Fair.

Even 88 years later.

And now, fair board members are looking to recapture the flavor of fair days gone by in a special way — through pictures. But they need lots of help from the community to do it.

“We’d like to pictorially illustrate the history of the fair so people today can gain some appreciation for what it has been in the past,” fair board president John Allen said. “It didn’t become what it is today without being something really wonderful along the way. I definitely want people to understand its rich heritage.”

County archivist Glenn Jones is teaming up with the fair board to help carry out the photo project.

“I think it’s a good thing,” he said. “Lots of people have pictures of the old barns, concession stands or rides when their family was at the fair years ago, and it would be neat to bring them in. We could copy them at the archives or, if they have extras, they

could just give them to us and we could keep them in the archives forever.”

But during fair time, the photos will be on a timeline display for all to see and enjoy.

Allen and Jones look forward to seeing photos of old structures, agriculture and people who represent the flavor of the fair — particularly during its earliest decades.

“We’re mainly looking for things that have something in the background that would be interesting to everyone,” Jones said. “Maybe some of the old rides. Maybe a big crowd in the stands.”

Photos may be taken to the county archives at 121 B Dixie Ave. or emailed to archives@putnamco.org. Submissions should include details such as when and where the photo was taken and names of people, if known.

Jones said the archives has been trying to collect old fair photos for years and hopes this project will boost that effort.

He noted one photo already at the archives — that of Clarence Bartlett from 1949, showing off a cow in the arena when the fair was located on Maple Avenue and Fourth Street.

“This is a good example,” he said. “You can see in the background the barns, the Coca-Cola signs and all of that. This is cool. People love this stuff. Everybody’s got pictures like this.”

Allen anticipates lots of community interest in the project.

“I envision we’ll get more than we can put in an exhibit,” he said. “Depending on what we get, maybe we’ll have to do a larger exhibit at some point, but we’ll do our best to utilize everything we can. We just ask people’s understanding in that we don’t know what the volume is going to be.”

Photos from recent decades are welcome, but Jones said the archives will only be able to scan the old ones. All other submissions should be copies of the originals and donated to the archives.

“The archives will keep them because that’s part of the county history, and the fair board could use them anytime they wanted to,” he said.

Allen encourages people to get busy looking through their old albums and get their photos to the archives by June 15.

“If people love the fair, they need to find pictures that will help us illustrate that love,” he said.

*Read more about Putnam Co., TN and surrounding countries at:
<http://www.ajlambert.com>