

COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

History of the Boone County Fair

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1835

The first Boone County Fair in 1835 was also the first fair in Missouri and first fair west of the Mississippi River, according to a short historical book, “The History of the Boone County Fair,” by Walter Proctor, published in the early 1950s. According to Proctor, Boone County farmers planned the county fair as English and American fur traders were passing through on their way to Oregon, competing for the fur trade in the state. The book states the location was just east of the Stephens College campus.

1841

The fair, then organized by a group called the Boone County Agricultural and Mechanical Association, was located on “a tract bounded by Rollins, Hitt, Porter and College streets, and fairs were held there for some forty years,” according to “A Boone County Album,” by the Columbia/Boone County Sesquicentennial Commission and published in 1971.

Early 1890s

The fairgrounds at the time were sold after interest in the fair declined. At least two fairs were held on pasture land in the southeast suburbs of Columbia, but they were unsuccessful, according to “A Boone County Album.” The fair of 1894 was cancelled “almost without prior notice.”

1897

The Boone County Agricultural and Mechanical Society revived the fair in 1897. The association leased and eventually bought the fairgrounds located at the end of Fifth Street, bordered by Wilkes Boulevard, Third Street, Mores Boulevard

and Seventh Street.

1918-1946

No fair was held between these dates. The Boone County Fair stopped at the beginning of World War I and in the following years, residents lost their interest in fairs, according to “A Boone County Album.” There were still many attempts to bring back the fair during this time.

1947

In January 1947, representatives from local organizations met to organize a second Boone County Ham Breakfast and Show and ended up also creating the Boone County Fair Association, according to “A Boone County Album.” Referred to as a “hopeful experiment,” the fair was intended to return on a temporary basis, but “apparently people were ‘fair hungry’” and nearly 20,000 people attended the opening days. The fair was held on West Boulevard, where West Boulevard School was later built, according to the album.

Boone Countians donated money to buy 40 acres of land on Worley and Clinkscapes Road as many expected the fair to have continued success. The fair has since taken place every year since 1947.

1960

Twenty of the 40 acres purchased at Worley and Clinkscapes Road for the fairgrounds were sold to the Columbia Board of Education.

1991

The Boone County Fair Board traded the Clinkscapes fairgrounds property for 226 acres of land north of Columbia, what’s now known as the Central Missouri Events Center, according to a 2002 Columbia Daily Tribune article. That year’s fair was held on the new site.

1999

The Boone County Commission purchased 134 acres of the property off of North Oakland Gravel Road for \$2.6 million from the fair board.

2014

Boone County voters reject Proposition EPIC, an eighth-cent sales tax to support operations at the Central Missouri Events Center, in August 2014 with 18,165 “no” votes to the 9,206 “yes” votes.

2015

The commission closes the Central Missouri Events Center on Jan. 1, 2015, following the failure of Proposition EPIC, but allows the fair board to host the fair on the site that summer at a cost of \$30,000.

2016

in 2016, the Boone County Fair was held at the Sturgeon fairgrounds for the first time. The fair remained there in 2017 and will be located in Sturgeon again in 2018.