

EXHIBITIONS: THE FIRST ONES HELD AND THOSE OF THE PRESENT DAY

THE Exhibition of the year 1906 is a thing of the past. To many of the people of this province it was an occasion looked forward to weeks, and even months before, with pleasant anticipation. This year it was an event of even more than ordinary importance, for a special grant from the Dominion had enabled those having the affair in hand to greatly enlarge the value of the prizes offered and to induce greater competition in all classes of exhibits by throwing the Exhibit on open to all Canada.

As far as the efforts of the Directors, under the leadership of their indefatigable and untiring President went, the show was a success beyond all precedent. It was altogether regrettable that the most important day of the dates arranged for the Exhibition should have been one on which the rain fell almost without ceasing from dawn till dark, thus disappointing thousands of people all over the province, and frustrating the painstaking efforts of the management, and depriving them materially of a large portion of the revenue that should have rewarded them for their enterprise and hard work.

It may be interesting to readers of The Guardian to have here compared the first efforts in the nature of an agricultural show with the present elaborate and thoroughly organized Exhibition and Races which in this Province is the chief happening each autumn in the course of events.

After the formative period in this Island's history it was early recognized by the leading men of affairs that Agricultural

Society, some account of which may be found in an article contributed to The Magazine Guard an last spring.

These gentlemen did much to encourage the newly arrived settlers, many of whom were not well off, to develop the land on which they were settled. By means of importing plough shares, seeds, and occasionally some good stock from time to time under the auspices of the Society, a start was given to individual enterprise.

Subsequently public men took an interest in fostering agriculture, and in those days competitions in ploughing were held on Government House grounds, under the patronage of Governor Ready. There does not appear to have been anything in the nature of a horse and cattle show or agricultural exhibition held at that time.

It is evident however that some attention was paid to horse breeding and the newspapers of those days contain references to celebrated sires imported from England. Race meetings appear to have been frequent, and were made the occasions of jollity of rather a boisterous nature it is to be feared—for in those days public sentiment had not been focussed in a prohibitory law.

The first mention we have of anything in the nature of an "exhibition" occurs in The Islander newspaper of August 1, 1851. It reads as follows:—

"The first attempt to get up in Prince Edward Island an Exhibition of this nature, now so common in all civilized parts of the world, was made on Thursday, some account of which may be found in an article contributed to The Magazine Guard an last spring.

With an Account of the First Flower and Vegetable Show Held in Charlottetown in the Year 1851, and the Advances Made to the Present Time.

Mansion were crowded at an early hour, with no inconsiderable portion of the beauty and fashion of the Town. There was a stand for flowers erected in front of the house which was filled with Geraniums, Fuchsias, Hydrangeas,

and some of the connoisseurs by producing some "thumping red Praaties," the growth of this season, but which turned out to be the production of the Bermudas. After the party had promenade the grounds for some time, to the

"It was intended, we believe, at first to have had only prizes for the exhibition of flowers; the sum collected having proved more than was expected, the residue was disposed of as above.

"There are always difficulties greater or less in the way of every first attempt, however humble; nor was the first exertion to bring into notice the Floricultural and Horticultural resources of this Island an exception. The public are under great obligations, however, to Mrs. GRUBB, for having thus led the way, which, we trust, will be followed up, as we have no doubt it will be, by increased success, at every succeeding trial. The pleasures of the hour were greatly enhanced by the kind attention of the Lady of the Mansion, and her amiable family. There was a "the darsan'ce" at Holland Grove in the evening."

After the forerunner of the exhibitions had thus been established, something of the same kind was held more or less during the years that followed. The shows were generally got up under the patronage of the Governor of the Colony, or encouraged by the local Agricultural Societies, or by prominent landowners. There were in those days many men who took a deep interest in the welfare of the Island and spared no pains to encourage and stimulate the farmers to develop their farms and learn the possibilities of the soil. Not many of these men can now be recalled by readers of this article, but a notable example of the men alluded to,

and experiments carried out on his own farm, and by his pen, did splendid work along the line of needed instruction to tillers of the soil.

Finally the Local Government took a hand in the matter and evolved a sort of order with regard to annual shows, the importation of prize cattle of superior breeds for breeding purposes, and the securing and trying of seed grain, etc. The Stock Farm was established and undoubtedly in its early years was of value to the Province.

Consequently the time arrived when the exhibition became an annual event which ranked in importance with the gathering of the Clan, and brought the people into Charlottetown from all districts in the Island.

Who among the readers of this paper who has spent his youth in Charlottetown does not remember the glorious days when the Exhibition used to be held in the Drill Shed and the Cattle Show and Horse Fair on the Government House Grounds adjoining. It was considered quite a step in advance when it was decided to make the Exhibition and Show extend over two days.

A comparison of the methods of the day with the present well organized Association with properly equipped Exhibition Building, Cattle and Show Grounds and one of the finest race tracks in the Maritime Provinces, is hardly necessary. It merely brings very plainly before one the fact that in this respect at least proper advancement has been made, and that the having the Exhibition and races in the charge are interested in the



HON. F. L. HASZARD, President Charlottetown Driving Park and Exhibition Association

Myrtles, Cacti, and many other varieties of the numerous and beautiful family of Flora. Several Doquets of flowers grown in the open air, gave an air of richness and splendour to the whole. On an adjoining stand there was a small, but tempting display of the cultivated Strawberry, some white Raspberries, and a variety of Gooseberries, which, though not ripe, were sufficiently advanced to show the perfection they were destined to arrive at.

"At another stand early Potatoes, Carrots, Beans, Peas, Lettuce, &c., &c., met the eye, and afforded a convincing proof that we need want none of the wholesome luxuries which the department of the Kitchen garden is able to afford us.

accompaniment of the excellent airs of the Sons of Temperance Band—who volunteered for the occasion—the prizes were declared by the Judges—Messrs. Barrow and Lawson, for flowers; Messrs G. White and J. Hensley, for Fruits and Vegetables—to have been awarded—

- For the finest Plant and Flower—Mrs. Fielding, wife of Mr. Fielding, Cabinet-maker, Charlottetown 22 00
- For the best Bouquet—Mrs. L. W. Gall 11 00
- For the best dish of Strawberries—Mrs. F. Longworth 015 6
- For the best kitchen Vegetable, a dish of Early Horn Carrots—Mrs. J. Brecken 015 0
- For the best Gooseberries—Mr. Thomas Dodd, Cherry Valley, 010 0

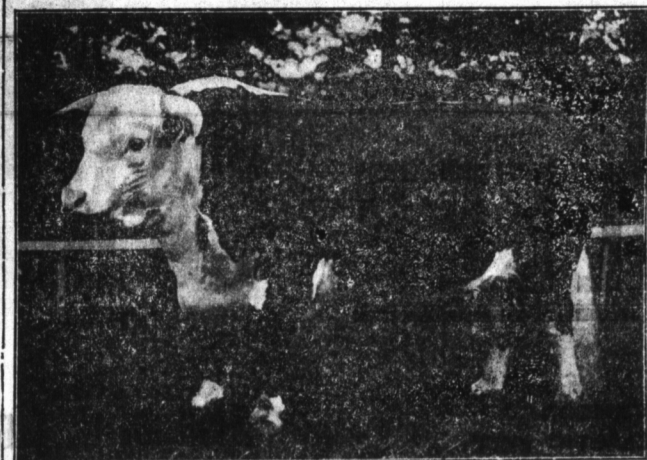


Type of Polled Aberdeen Cattle.

ture was the main stay of the Colony, and in the year 1859 some of the prominent land holders got together and formed the Prince Edward Island Agricultural

day, the 31st ult., at Holland Grove, the residence of Mrs. GRUBB, and not without a fair share of success. The highly ornamented grounds in the vicinity of the

"His Excellency the Lieut. Governor"



Type of Shorthorn Cattle.

was the late Judge Peters, father of the Premier of this Province. Judge Peters was an enthusiast on agricultural work and vigorously, by means of object lessons

welfare of the Island just as much, if not more, than those men who in the early days already mentioned were the means of starting agricultural competitions in Prince Edward Island.



THE RACE TRACK—CHARLOTTETOWN DRIVING PARK AND EXHIBITION GROUNDS—1906.