



Our Old Bookcase, November 9, 2017,

Photo caption: This Post Card Photograph was used to advertise the Mercer County Banner Fair on August 17 - 21, 1908. The Post Mark is dated July 6, 1908, Celina, Ohio. This Post Card with its Post Mark from the Celina, Ohio Post Office, will be on the 17th Annual Post Card & Post Mark Exhibit, at the Mercer County Historical Museum on Sunday, November 12, 2017.

OUR OLD BOOK CASE

By Joyce L. Alig, President, Mercer County Historical Society

The Mercer County Fairboard recognized the importance of preserving the History of this Mercer County Fair, when their Member Mike Niekamp came to the Mercer County Historical Museum and explained that the Fairboard wanted a History book written about the Fair, in honor of the 150th Anniversary of the first Mercer County Fair, in 1852. Fran Guilbault was a Volunteer at the Mercer County Historical Museum, and he agreed to review the weekly Coldwater Chronicle Newspapers, and gather history about the County Fairs' events. The Fairboard shared photographs. Under the Mercer County Historical Society, we published the book, *"The Mercer County Fair, Celina, Ohio, 1852-2002."*

The First Mercer County Fair was a one day event, held on October 28, 1852, at Celina. The site of the First Fair is unclear. (County Fairs were not held every year, as they are today.) By 1872, the Mercer County Fair was held on 17-18 acres of land, owned by the State of Ohio, near Grand Lake, on the site known as Mercelina Park, on Lake Shore Drive. A decade later, in 1882, a Grandstand to seat 1500 persons was constructed at this Fairground site by Grand Lake. In 1890, the Agricultural Society hired Professor Thompson, the most noted aeronaut of America to provide a balloon ascension and parachute leap for three days at the Fair by Grand Lake.

The Mercer County Agricultural Society pursued 18 acres of land in 1893 on West Market Street. This is the site of the present Fairground in 2017. The first Fair held at this site was August 21-24, 1894. In 1896, the only United States President to ever visit the Mercer County Fair, was W.G. Harding and his wife. In January 1896, at the previous site of the Fair by Grand Lake, the old Grandstand was destroyed by fire, apparently through arson.

In 1899, fire destroyed nine buildings at the Fair Ground site on West Market St. In 1900, the Board of Mercer County Commissioners was authorized to purchase more land and to replace the buildings destroyed by fire, which may have included the Grand Stand. In 1917, the Agricultural Society purchased twelve acres of land to provide more space for parking. A balloon ascension was held at the August 1924 County Fair. In 1927, the Grand Stand was renovated, and the half mile tract was put in for a better race track. By 1935, a new Grand Stand was added under the guidelines of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The most recent repair at the Grandstand was made the summer of 2012, after a storm.

Are the Mercer County Agricultural Society Members are continuing to preserve the history of the Mercer County Fair, since 2002, when the Mercer County Historical Society published the book, "*The Mercer County Fair, Celina, Ohio, 1852-2002?*" Are the various Departments who plan and implement the many facets of the Fair, preserving the history of their work with the Fair? For history of the County Fair, read the County Historical Society's book, "*The Mercer County Fair, Celina, Ohio, 1852-2002.*"

On Sunday, November 12, at the Mercer County Historical Museum, 130 East Market, Celina, collectors of Post Card Photographs exhibiting their collections are Sharon and Bob Poor and Dale Poepelman. David Gray will exhibit his Mercer County Post Mark collection from the old discontinued Post Offices in Mercer County. The importance of old Post Card Photographs not only preserve local history, but also preserve the history of the Post Offices, especially the Post Marks of the Closed Post Offices.

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