

Exhaustive Analysis of Green County Fair

It is always important after planning an event to evaluate how things can be improved for the next time. This is especially true with the Green County Fair, which has been in operation since 1853. As seen in the headlines of the Monroe Evening Times on January 10, 1916, Frank B. Luchsinger made many recommendations to the fair board. He was president of the fair and had made an "exhaustive analysis" of the 1915 event with some suggestions to the Green County Agricultural Association that afternoon. He showed that there had been a good increase in business in 1915, but felt there was still a greater possibility for 1916.

While presenting his first annual report, he "made a number of criticisms of the manner in which the affairs had been conducted in the past, and in the interest of more business-like management offered a number of suggestions." He started by saying that, "if legitimate private business would be conducted as are our fairs, it would be inviting failure." While discussing the finances of the institution, he pointed out that he had discovered some errors that were difficult to explain. Without going into detail here, he found that the numbers reported from one year to the next did not coordinate. He started comparing the numbers from 1912 forward.

He also praised C. S. Dodge, who was in charge of all of the privileges and shows in 1915 for some of the gain in revenue in 1915. There was a profit of more than \$600 from only those two portions. In spite of the rain (and plenty of it), the attendance was practically the same as 1914. Dodge refused payment of any kind such as car fare or hotel expense. Luchsinger also praised a Mr. Holcomb for soliciting more than \$400. During 1915, the association had collected \$119 more money from the rental of ground and buildings than the previous year. That was \$28 more than for the three previous years combined. The association also received more than \$300 from advertisements in the premium list, money that they had never received before. The net cost of the harness races was \$1,100 of the \$2,855 budgeted for them.

Luchsinger then briefly addressed the secretary's office, preferring not to discuss it. He pointed out that the constitution stated that the annual salary of the secretary was fixed at \$300, but that she was able to hire a clerk for no more than an additional \$200 for up to ten days before the opening of the fair. The help was paid \$268 in 1915 with the average paid for the previous four years being \$282.62. He mentioned that Elkhorn paid \$94.45 for the same service in 1914. He also mentioned that he had personally sent 398 typewritten letters from his office for which he had paid his stenographer \$12 for overtime. Mr. White had also paid his stenographer \$10 for work she had done for him.

Luchsinger also took up the question of meal tickets, stating that \$115.50 had been expended in 1915. The average expended for the previous four years had been \$123.58. He said, "Gentlemen, your Santa Claus has been working overtime on the meal ticket proposition. The speed department all told used \$3 worth of meal tickets. Someone else used \$112.50 worth. The secretary and treasurer should report why the tickets were not accounted for according to instructions given by the directors." He urged a cutting of needless expenses and felt the stockholders should forego dividends until the indebtedness was paid off. He urged the members to be better boosters for the fair and that each should pay \$15 for a box in the amphitheater as he had done annually for several years.

The stockholders then decided, looking for better accommodations for automobiles, to have a subway constructed under the race tracks to permit the autos to pass with safety and convenience to the infield where they would be parked. With the increasing number of cars in the area, the number of autos driven to the fair also increased. The infield had been totally covered by autos during the 1915 fair.

Local contractors, Wagner & Bauman, submitted plans to the stockholders at the meeting with an estimate of completing the work for \$2,300. The plans had a sufficient width for two roadways plus a walk for pedestrians. This would allow for vehicles to pass during all hours of the day - even while races were in progress. Prior to this there had been a plank laid across the track while the vehicles were passing to keep it in good shape, which took considerable work to lay and remove the planks. It was also necessary to keep special police officers at the crossing to handle the crowds and prevent accidents. Construction of the subway, which passed by a 29 to 26 vote, would diminish this expense and was to be done during the early summer. I have never seen any evidence that this did happen.

John N. Burns, county superintendent of the rural schools, addressed the meeting in reference to the corn prizes that had been offered during the fair. Unfortunately, the weather made it impossible for mature corn to be entered at that time. So that contest was held in connection with the Cheese Day

celebration. According to the paper on January 11 he said that, “Although the state allowed its share of the prizes, President Luchsinger objected to the fair association doing likewise on the grounds that the contest was not held as a part of the fair.”

According to the paper of the 17th, Luchsinger wrote from Denver that, “the state aid was earned independent of the corn contest and consequently the state pays no part of it.” He also stated that he was anxious to have these prizes paid. He said the officers had no right to pay for any exhibit not held at the fairgrounds without permission from the stockholders.



Harness races were a major part of the Green County Fair for decades. This photo of a postcard from the Marv Ruff collection was postmarked in 1915, the year of the last county fair before Frank Luchsinger’s evaluation of the event.