

## 1909 Green County Homecoming Brings a Crowd

After all of the planning and anticipation of the Green County Fair and Homecoming, September 8, 1909 finally arrived. It was then up to the weather to cooperate. The Monroe Evening Times reported that evening, "Ominous clouds obscured the sun all day today and set everyone to speculating as to what brand of weather the fair would draw during the remaining three days, which are the days that count for financial success or failure of the fair." A slow drizzle did not deter anyone from going about their business that day.

The midway shows opened that evening for the first time. Big Otto's wild animal show with 25 cages of animals, Fairies in the Well, and No Name wild girl were some of the attractions. Fearless Brodie was to make his first high dive that evening if the weather permitted. He jumped from a platform 55 feet in the air into five feet of water. "The merry-go-round is the finest outfit of the kind ever brought here."



5258 GREETINGS FROM THE GREEN CO. FAIR & HOME COMING. MONROE WIS  
A portion of this photograph, taken by Gloege possibly in 1908, was used as part of the promotion of the homecoming in the Monroe Evening Times on August 20, 1909. The caption in the newspaper stated, "Grounds of the Great Green County Fair." On the next line it said "Annual fair and Green County homecoming celebration takes place there Sept. 8, 9, 10 and 11. A day and night fair will be held this year." This postcard came from the collection of Marv Rufi.

The first full day of the event opened to "a drizzling rain and with the sky heavy with threatening clouds, which brought the first uncertainty as to the success of the fair." The race track was too wet for any races. People who were on the grounds were well-entertained in spite of the conditions. The homecoming tent was still busy because the "homecomers gathered to meet and visit." Many names were listed in the paper that day. Hiram Gabriel, who we recently heard about, was a guest of the Stewart family for the homecoming and old settlers day.

There was a dining hall tent on the grounds that was 40 by 80 with another tent for the kitchen, which was 20 by 30. Paul A. Ruf conducted the only refreshment stand on the infield. "Here he has erected a square building with openings on all sides. He has an ice box that holds 1,000 bottles of pop. Soda fountain drinks, sundaes, etc., will also be served. It is the best equipped stand that has ever been on the grounds."

The Friday paper reported, "Clear skies and a prediction of fair weather for tomorrow now gives the Green County fair a chance to make good and is making good. The regular morning trains and the specials from the south and east were crowded with passengers." The old

settlers' exercises in the homecoming tent were enjoyed by the audience that filled the tent. A ball game putting Monroe against Janesville attracted another large portion of the crowd. Janesville won the game in 12 innings with a score of 5 to 4. Several thousand were interested in the midway with others watching the stock judging.

That afternoon was the automobile parade with 31 machines participating. Mrs. E. J. Manning drove the Blumer Buick, which took the top prize. It was decorated with red roses and two large butterflies in front; two small girls were passengers. Andrew Trickle's E. M. & F. Car, which took second, was decorated in purple and white.

A wild west show presented western romantic drama near the north east corner of the grounds. There was also a 24-year-old "Filipino girl who is tamed to the extent that she does not have to be chained." Also included was an "Oriental theater where one is carried so far away in Egypt, and sees for himself the old manners and customs of the Orientalists as they line [sic] in Cairo and along the banks of the Nile." The crowning event in the minds of many was the "Human Roulette Wheel" at the head of the midway. The device had a convex whirling surface revolving in a concave pit where a "crowd of youths and youngsters climb on to the center and then they are hurled in every direction into the side lines with all manners of grotesque sprawling, affording vast amusement for the spectators."

It was estimated that the attendance on Friday was at least 14,000, which was believed to be 25 to 33% more than the Friday a year earlier. The receipts on Thursday had fallen "only a little short of the first day last year." This exceeded the previous record by \$55 for Friday.

On Saturday the "people began to pour into town early and the big rush came with the arrival of the morning trains. The Illinois Central brought an immense crowd from the north and the regular from the south had eight coaches and was followed by a special train of ten coaches. The Milwaukee road brought 240 more from the east than yesterday and 150 more than yesterday from the west." It was estimated that there were 20,000 attendees that day.

The motorcycle races were held at 5:30 with Ferd Ingold taking first in the 2-mile scratch and Lewis Dodge winning the 3-mile race. Knight of Strathmore set a new record for 3-year-old horses over a half mile track.

Monday's paper reported that the homecoming was "the success that was anticipated. Former residents were brought here from at least 18 states together with Canada and the District of Columbia. It was unfortunate that because of the great crowds in attendance at the fair that more attention could not be given to the entertainment of the homecomers.

"The homecomers' tent was the gathering place for most of them who visited with old friends there. The tent proved a blessing and there was a crowd of several hundred there most of the time.

"There was music by the Badger Girls' orchestra each day and, while the orchestra was placed at disadvantage because of the noise and other attractions, their music pleased the people."

The total receipts of the fair were \$7,420.80, which was more than \$1,500 more than in 1908. The fair received 15% of the carnival shows receipts, which was \$700.