

THE NORTH CAROLINA
STATE FAIR, 1853-1899

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE FAIR

The North Carolina State Fair played a significant role in the economic awakening of North Carolina that occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century. From its formation in 1853 until the Granger movement, the North Carolina State Agricultural Society and the fair which it sponsored represented the only organized attempts to bring agricultural reforms to the farmers of the entire state. Throughout the nineteenth century the fair served as a medium through which North Carolina farmers were acquainted with blooded livestock, the latest farm machinery, and improved farming methods. Its annual exhibits of superior farm products both created and helped to maintain the farmer's interest in agricultural reforms. In addition to instigating reforms in agriculture the fair attempted to encourage North Carolina's industrial development. On a less serious side, the fair provided an enjoyable holiday for thousands of North Carolinians and was the biggest event of the year in the lives of many of the state's rural citizens.

The fair's formation was a result of an agricultural reform movement within the state, itself a part of a larger general reform movement which began in earnest after 1835 and reached its peak during the last decade of the ante-bellum period. To understand this movement for agricultural reform and how it led to the fair's establishment, it is necessary to briefly examine the agricultural conditions that existed in ante-bellum North Carolina.

Ante-bellum North Carolina had obtained a nation wide reputation for its agricultural backwardness, a reputation which was, regrettably, well

deserved. The agricultural methods used by the state's farmers were surprisingly similar to those used by its first settlers. Most farmers relied on superstition to govern their planting and harvesting. Few attempted to fertilize their crops, and those who did know little of the scientific application of fertilizers. The average farmer was ignorant of how correct methods of tilling the soil could improve his crop. Lands were badly over-cropped, resulting in exhausted soils, and the average farmer did little to reclaim such lands.¹ Crop rotation was practiced by only a small minority as was the practice of adequately draining fields.² Such conditions were, unfortunately, prevalent throughout the state.

Agricultural implements used by the ante-bellum North Carolina farmer were badly outdated. Only a few of the state's more progressive farmers possessed modern farm machinery. Edmund Ruffin was surprised to find that the sickle was used to harvest grain on some of the state's largest farms.³ Plows used on North Carolina farms were described as "most absurd." A farmer from Edgecombe County, the most progressive agricultural county of ante-bellum North Carolina, could say in 1853 that the average farmer's implements were "but the crudest, and that is kept prostrate by importations of trashy productions of northern workshops."⁴

Livestock received much less attention from the ante-bellum farmer than did field crops, and the appearance of most of the stock attested to this

¹ Cornelius O. Cathey, Agricultural Developments in North Carolina, 1783-1860, Vol. 38 of The James Swain Studies in History and Political Science, ed. Fletcher M. Green and others (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 75. Hereinafter cited as Cathey, Agricultural Developments.

² Edmund Ruffin, Agricultural, Geological, and Descriptive Sketches of Lower North Carolina and Similar Adjacent Lands (Raleigh: Printed at the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and Blind, 1861), pp. 89, 58.

³ Ibid., p. 85.

⁴ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 74.

fact. The vast majority of the state's cattle were a mixture of several breeds, and they were allowed to forage for themselves.⁵ The first registered bull was brought into the state in 1841. Sheep were left to shift for themselves, and a system of "root, hog, or die" was used by most of the farmers who raised swine. The common "razor back" or range hog comprised the majority of the state's swine herds, and few blooded swine were to be found. In short, livestock of all types were generally neglected by the farmer, who felt no need to care for them.⁶

The state's retarded agricultural development was caused by several factors. Having no port of any consequence and few navigable rivers, North Carolina was faced with a transportation problem. For years the state government did little to help overcome this handicap, almost ignoring completely the farmer's cries for internal improvements. There were few railroads in the state prior to 1840, and roads were mere trails, usually filled with either mud or sand.⁷ Such a system severely handicapped the farmer in his efforts to market his produce and, at times, made marketing impossible. As there were no public schools until 1840, and few private ones, the majority of North Carolina's farmers possessed no formal education. Thus ignorance prevented, to a large degree, the state's agricultural progress. Tradition also helped to keep North Carolina agriculturally backward. Most of the farmers chose to accept the methods used by their fathers without questioning

⁵ North Carolina Planter, I (January, 1858), 23.

⁶ Robert S. Curtis, The History of Livestock in North Carolina (Raleigh: Agricultural Experiment Station, North Carolina State College, 1956), pp. 16-19, 90-91, 103.

⁷ Hugh T. Lefler, and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina, The History of a Southern State (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), pp. 346-47. Hereinafter cited as Lefler, North Carolina, The History of a Southern State; Robert B. Starling, "The Plank Road Movement in North Carolina, Part I," North Carolina Historical Review, XVI (January, 1939), 2. Hereinafter cited as Starling, "The Plank Road Movement."

their merits. The state's warm climate, plentiful game and fish, and many wild fruits and berries, things usually considered a blessing, proved a detriment to progressive agriculture. Some rural North Carolinians, finding that they could procure a living without exerting a large amount of effort, were little inclined to become farmers in the true sense of the word.

Regardless of their causes, in a state whose economy was almost entirely agricultural, such conditions as those previously described were particularly damaging. Poverty and ignorance were widespread among the state's farmers. The morale of the people in general was low.⁸ Faced with the choice of reform, continued poverty, or migration, thousands of North Carolinians chose the latter alternative, joining a mass migration to the western frontier.⁹

The plight of ante-bellum North Carolina's agriculture did not go unnoticed by the state's agricultural and political leaders, many of whom began to call for reform. George W. Jeffreys, North Carolina's leading early agricultural reformer, stated that the state of agriculture in North Carolina was "at the lowest ebb." But he also noted signs of improvements which he hoped would continue. Jeffreys published in 1819 a series of 47 essays on various agricultural subjects in an effort to encourage agricultural reforms.¹⁰ Other prominent men also began to express their opinion of what action should be taken to rectify the state's agricultural condition. Denison Olsted, professor at the University of North Carolina, suggested that intelligence should be used in farming as well as in other

⁸ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 75.

⁹ Hugh Hill Wooten, "Westward Migration from Iredell County, 1800-1850," North Carolina Historical Review, XXX (January, 1953), 61-71.

¹⁰ George W. Jeffreys, A Series of Essays on Agriculture and Rural Affairs in Forty-Seven Numbers (Raleigh: Joseph Gales, 1819), p. 5.

business enterprises. Paul C. Cameron, one of the state's leading planters, believed that the farmers would have to take pride in their work before North Carolina agriculture could flourish.¹¹ Though these and other individuals recognized the state's agricultural problems and offered suggestions aimed at their solution, organization to promote agricultural reform was lacking.

The first semblance of organized reform activity was the organization of agricultural societies throughout the state. The agricultural society first appeared in the South as early as 1785 when the South Carolina Agricultural Society was formed at Charleston. The idea made some headway in the first decade of the 19th century, but it was only after the War of 1812 that agricultural societies began to spring up throughout the South.¹²

The first agricultural societies formed in North Carolina were county societies. The earliest such society, the Edgecombe County Agricultural Society, was founded in 1810.¹³ Several other counties followed Edgecombe's example. The county societies attempted to encourage the farmers to adopt agricultural reforms through their meetings, which were usually held monthly. At these meetings, speeches on agricultural subjects were delivered by the more prominent planters and the members' mutual problems were discussed.

¹¹ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 75.

¹² Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), II, 783-84. Hereinafter cited as Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern U. S.

¹³ Albert Ray Newsome, "Twelve North Carolina Counties in 1810-1811," North Carolina Historical Review, VI (January, 1929), 91.

Some societies gave premiums for superior production of certain crops and essays on agricultural subjects.¹⁴ Several began to hold fairs during the eighteen-twenties.¹⁵

The first North Carolina state society, the North Carolina Agricultural Society, was formed in 1818.¹⁶ Many of the county societies in existence at that time became affiliated with the state society. This organization was the prototype of the state fair's parent organization, the North Carolina State Agricultural Society, which was formed some thirty-five years later. The original society offered cash premiums for essays written on agricultural subjects such as the prevention and cure of certain livestock diseases. It also offered a fifteen dollar cash premium for the best corn, wheat, rye, and cotton crops grown on two or more acres of reclaimed land.¹⁷ Though it considered sponsoring a state fair, the idea was rejected.

The early agricultural society movement, though not a complete failure, was disappointing to the advocates of agricultural reform. The first state society was never effectively organized and became defunct within a few years after its establishment. The county societies, being composed of local men and held on a more informal basis, were more successful. Yet because of their failure to attract the "dirt" farmer, and a general spirit of indifference, these societies declined and disappeared during the thirties.

¹⁴ For a detailed account of the proceedings of an early county agricultural society, see Nannie May Tilley (ed.), "Journal of the Surry County (N. C.) Agricultural Society," North Carolina Historical Review, XXIV (October, 1947), 494-531. Hereinafter cited as Tilley, "Journal of the Surry County Society."

¹⁵ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 76; Guion G. Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), pp. 107-108. Hereinafter cited as Johnson, Ante-Bellum N. C.

¹⁶ Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern U. S., p. 784.

¹⁷ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 77.

The early societies had, however, shown that interest in reform was growing, and they had prepared the way for a revival of the agricultural reform movement after 1845.¹⁸

Among the factors causing the revival of the agricultural reform movement during the eighteen-forties were the publication of Justus Liebig's work on soil chemistry, the influence of Edmund Ruffin, Virginia agricultural reformer, and a growing recognition of the need for reform.¹⁹ As part of this general reform movement, the county agricultural societies were re-established. The revived county societies attempted to make themselves more attractive to the average farmer than had been their predecessors. Much of the formality that had existed in the earlier societies was abandoned. The formal lecture was partially replaced by informal discussion of agricultural problems, techniques, and the reform movement in general. Several societies revived the practice of holding agricultural fairs, which proved to be more successful than the fairs of the earlier societies.²⁰

The state government began to give some consideration to the state's lagging agricultural development in the eighteen-twenties and from that time on was more or less active in the agricultural reform movement. To assist in the establishment of county societies, the legislature provided, in 1822, \$10,000 to be distributed among the counties wishing to form agricultural societies. Each new society was required to raise by its own efforts an amount equal to the state funds it received. Provisions were also made to encourage the offering of premiums for agricultural products.²¹ A "Board of Agriculture" composed of the president of the state society

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 80-83.

²¹ Tilley, "Journal of the Surry County Society," p. 495.

and a delegation appointed by him was to publish at the state's expense²² the reports from the county societies which it considered worthwhile. The number of counties availing themselves of this offer was disappointingly small, however.

The revival of the county societies was given a boost in 1852 by the enactment of legislation which provided that fifty dollars annually would be given to each organized county society on a matched fund basis. The money was to be used to pay premiums and expenses of agricultural fairs sponsored by the societies, which were required to submit an annual financial report to the state.²³

In 1823 the legislature authorized a geological and mineralogical survey of the state, which was conducted by Denison Olmsted and Elisha Mitchell, professors at the University of North Carolina. This survey dealt primarily with the state's mineral assets and was of limited value to the farmer. Of more aid to the farmer was an "agricultural, geological, mineralogical, and botanical survey of all counties" provided for in 1851 and conducted by Ebenezer Emmons, a native of New York and professor at the University of North Carolina, who was appointed state geologist.²⁴ The results of the survey were published in five volumes during the years 1852 to 1860 and later proved to be of some value to the state's farmers.²⁵ The state also

²² Johnson, Ante-Bellum N. C., pp. 107-108.

²³ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 80.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 90-94.

²⁵ Detailed information on North Carolina soils, plowing, drainage, and fertilizers and their effect are to be found in Ebenezer Emmons, Agriculture of North Carolina, Part II: Containing a Statement of the Principles of the Science upon Which the Practices of Agriculture, as an Art, Are Founded (Raleigh: W. W. Holden, Printer to the State, 1860).

spent \$191,364 during the years from 1820 to 1860 on the unfruitful project of attempting to increase the amount of arable land in the state by draining some of its eastern swamp lands.²⁶

The general reforms initiated by the state after revision of the state constitution in 1835, however, played a more significant role in the renewal of interest in agricultural reform that led to the fair's foundation than did the aid to the county societies, surveys, and drainage projects. After 1837, the state extended a continually increasing supply of capital to various railroad companies.²⁷ The legislature began to grant financial aid to the state's plank road companies in the session of 1848-1849.²⁸ Improved transportation facilities greatly aided the farmer in marketing his produce and thus helped to create a greater interest in improving the state's agriculture. The public school laws of 1839 and 1852 helped to remedy the problem of ignorance that plagued North Carolina's farmers.²⁹ In short, the legislation passed after 1835 reflected a desire for reform on the part of the majority of North Carolina's citizens. It was this continued desire for reform that resulted in the formation of the state fair.

Several agricultural journals published at various times and locations made significant contributions to the reform movement. In June, 1838, John Sherwood of Jamestown, North Carolina, began the publication of the Farmer's Advocate and Miscellaneous Reporter, a semi-monthly journal dedicated to agriculture. The paper lasted until 1842. In August, 1845,

²⁶ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 91.

²⁷ Lefler, North Carolina, The History of A Southern State, pp. 347-48.

²⁸ Starling, "The Plank Road Movement," p. 8.

²⁹ Lefler, North Carolina, The History of a Southern State, pp. 350-51, 363.

Thomas J. Lemay of Goldsboro issued his first North Carolina Farmer, a monthly journal which ran for four years. Dr. John F. Tompkins of Bath began to publish the Farmer's Journal in April, 1852. It was, perhaps, the finest of the agricultural journals published prior to the establishment of the fair; nevertheless, it lasted only two years.³⁰ Edmund Ruffin's Farmer's Register, which was published in Virginia from 1823 until 1843, was probably the most popular journal read in the state, largely because of Ruffin's national fame as an agricultural reformer. These journals carried articles on all phases of farm life, urging the use of improved machinery, the development of better livestock, and the use of scientific farming methods. They urged the state to establish agricultural schools in which farming could be taught as a profession.³¹ They also played a leading role in the establishment of the state fair.

Newspapers also took an active part in the general agricultural reform movement. They attempted to encourage the adoption of agricultural reforms by devoting columns to agricultural subjects, carrying agricultural articles from out-of-state papers, and editorializing on the agricultural needs of the state. They also requested the state to establish agricultural schools and increase its aid to public education.³² Among the leading papers ad-

³⁰ Wesley H. Wallace, "North Carolina's Agricultural Journals, 1838-1861: A Crusading Press," North Carolina Historical Review, XXXVI (July, 1959), 277. Hereinafter cited as Wallace, "N. C. Agricultural Journals."

³¹ Wallace, "N. C. Agricultural Journals," pp. 283-86; Richard Bardolph, "A North Carolina Farm Journal of the Middle 'Fifties," North Carolina Historical Review, XXV (January, 1948), 62-67. Hereinafter cited as Bardolph, "A N. C. Farm Journal."

³² Cornelius O. Cathey, "Sidney Weller: Ante-Bellum Promoter of Agricultural Reform," North Carolina Historical Review, XXXI (January, 1954), 2.

vocating agricultural reform were the Raleigh Star, the Hillsboro Recorder,
 the Tarboro Southern, and the Salisbury Carolina Watchman.³³

The journals, newspapers, societies, and the state government achieved some success in introducing agricultural reforms to the state, especially after 1845. Farmers began to use marl to combat soil acidity. The use of manures and compost came to be accepted by the more progressive farmers. The use of guano became popular during the early fifties.³⁴ Some farmers began to see the value of green manures and to experiment with cover crops, chiefly peas and clover. Farmers began to reclaim worn-out lands, practice crop rotation, use deep plowing methods, drain fields more adequately, and they abandoned the practice of "over cropping."³⁵

Though it was obvious that agricultural reforms were being introduced to North Carolina, it was also obvious that these reforms were being adopted by only the wealthy, more progressive farmer. The vast majority of the state's farmers remained unaffected by the reform movement. This was largely because none of the forces of agricultural reform was able to reach effectively the average farmer. The surveys and drainage projects sponsored by the state did the farmer little good during the ante-bellum period. The establishment of public schools presaged improvements in the future, but did little for the established farmer. The state's aid in the development of an internal transportation system helped to create an interest in agricultural reform by providing markets for farm produce, but it did nothing to acquaint the farmer with improved farming methods. The agricultural journals were read by only a few of the state's farmers, most of whom were, if not planters, at least large

³³ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, pp. 90-94.

³⁴ Rosser H. Taylor, "Fertilizers and Farming in the Southeast, 1840-1950, Part I: 1840-1900," North Carolina Historical Review, XXX (July, 1953), 307-308.

³⁵ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, pp. 95-103.

scale farmers. Lacking the support of the average farmer, none of the journals survived over four years. Newspapers were unable to carry the detailed information needed by the farmer. The agricultural societies appealed chiefly to the gentleman farmer; although several of the later societies tried to correct this weakness, they were largely unsuccessful. Edgecombe and its neighboring counties, the center of the state's slavocracy, were the center of the reform movement.³⁶ Elsewhere the movement lagged or was non-existent. In short, though there was some interest in agricultural reform among the state's smaller farmers, the ardent advocates of agricultural reform were the more progressive planters, many of whom, as leading political figures, were involved in every aspect of the general reform movement.

The average farmer throughout the state remained in his state of agricultural backwardness. As late as 1852 Dr. Tompkins was able to state that the great agricultural advances made in other parts of the nation were "but little known to the farmers of North Carolina."³⁷

It was obvious that some new approach was needed through which the reform spirit that was so noticeable among the more progressive farmers could be introduced to the majority of the state's farmers. This new approach had to appeal to the "dirt" farmer and yet be capable of encouraging him to adopt agricultural reforms. Of all the methods used by the various forces of the reform movement, the fairs of the county societies gave greatest promise of fulfilling this need.³⁸

Commercial fairs, which were descendants of the old medieval trade fairs, were held in the South as early as 1723 and continued to be held throughout the eighteenth century.³⁹ Such fairs were popular in North

³⁶ Farmer's Journal, I (May, 1852), 49-50.

³⁷ Ibid., I, 1.

³⁸ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 41

³⁹ Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern U. S., II, 781.

Carolina during the last decade of the eighteenth century.⁴⁰ The concept of the agricultural fair, however, was originated by Elkanah Watson of Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Watson, in 1809, had displayed a pair of Merino sheep in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, for the benefit of the local farmers. Because of the huge success of this exhibit, Watson and other farmers of the area staged a larger fair in October, 1810. This fair is generally considered the first organized agricultural fair held in the United States.

The next year the Berkshire County Agricultural Society was organized, and the idea of the county society sponsored fair began to spread. Largely because of the efforts of Watson, by 1819 both Massachusetts and New York had granted state funds to be used as premiums at the fairs of their county societies. The "Berkshire plan" began to reach the South around the early eighteen-twenties.⁴¹

Fairs sponsored by county societies began to appear in North Carolina by 1821. In that year the Rowan County Agricultural Society sponsored a fair which was described as "being novel in this part of the country" Several other county societies held fairs in the twenties, among them the Beaufort County Agricultural Society and the Guilford Agricultural Society.⁴² When the earlier societies began to decline in the thirties, their fairs naturally suffered the same fate. But when the societies were revived in the forties, so were the fairs. The Mecklenburg Society held an annual fair after 1842, and its lead was soon followed by several other societies.

⁴⁰ Johnson, Ante-Bellum N. C., p. 106.

⁴¹ Hugh M. Flick, "Elkanah Watson's Activities on Behalf of Agriculture," Agricultural History, XXI (October, 1947), 195-196.

⁴² Cathey, Agricultural Developments, p. 76; Johnson, Ante-Bellum N. C., pp. 107-108; Helen D. Wilkin, "Promotion of Agriculture in North Carolina, 1810-1860" (unpublished master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1941), pp. 51-79.

Several regional fairs were also established. Both county and regional fairs showed an ability to attract the interest of North Carolina's farmers.⁴³

Many of the advocates of agricultural reform felt that a state agricultural society and a fair sponsored by such an organization would provide a medium through which agricultural reforms could be introduced to the average farmers of the entire state. The editors of the agricultural journals were particularly strong supporters of this plan. John Sherwood had urged the formation of a state society in his Farmer's Advocate and Miscellaneous Reporter.⁴⁴ Thomas Lemay had also advocated the formation of a state society in the North Carolina Farmer.⁴⁵

It was, however, Dr. John F. Tompkins, editor of the Farmer's Journal, who made it his personal responsibility to see that such a society and fair were established. Early in 1852 Tompkins began a systematic campaign in the columns of his journal to bring about the establishment of a state society. He spoke with praise of the state societies of Pennsylvania and Maryland. He asked the farmers of North Carolina to establish agricultural societies in each county and to send, in July, delegates from each county society to Raleigh for the purpose of forming a state society. He begged the farmers of the state to write him and express their opinions concerning the desirability of forming a state society at the proposed Raleigh meeting.⁴⁶

The response to Tompkins' call for the farmers to express their views on the formation of a state society were extremely disappointing. But Tompkins was undaunted by this lack of interest. In July, 1852, he stated

⁴³ Cathey, Agricultural Developments, pp. 80-81.

⁴⁴ Wallace, "N. C. Agricultural Journals," p. 284.

⁴⁵ Bardolph, "A N. C. Farm Journal," p. 61.

⁴⁶ Farmer's Journal, I (May, 1852), 52.

that "They [the farmers] have failed to notice the appeal, and we therefore plainly see that we have got the work to do ourself." As an extra session of the legislature was to meet that October, Tompkins suggested that "the various County Societies appoint delegates to assemble at Raleigh on Monday the 18th of October next for the purpose of forming a State Agricultural Society." He further suggested that the number of delegates sent by each society should be ten. He ended his appeal with the demand that "every delegate who is appointed make it his business to attend the convention..."⁴⁷

In the September issue of his journal, Tompkins reminded his readers of the coming convention. He again urged the counties to form societies and elect as delegates to the convention men with "a deep interest in agriculture." The importance he placed on the formation of a state society can be seen from an excerpt taken from one of his editorials: "We can assure them [the delegates] that in giving their attention at this convention, they will be doing their country more service than by attending all the political mass meetings held in our state this fall."⁴⁸

Tompkins' efforts were rewarded when the State Agricultural Convention was held as planned at Raleigh, beginning Monday, October 18. Counties represented were Johnston, Beaufort, Edgecombe, Onslow, Wake, Bertie, Guilford, Rowan, Halifax, Pitt, Hertford, Buncombe, Wayne, Rutherford, Cumberland, Brunswick, Carteret, Haywood, Greene, and Richmond. Wake had the largest delegation, and the Edgecombe delegation was second largest. Most of the counties were represented by only one delegate, most of whom were leading planters of the county they represented.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 114.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 177.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 245-51.

Charles T. Hinton of Wake was elected president pro tempore, and the Convention got under way. A motion by Dr. Tompkins that five delegates be appointed to a committee by the president to "prepare resolutions, and take necessary measures for the organization of the State Society of Agriculture" was quickly adopted. Appointed to this committee were: Tompkins; John S. Dancy, Edgecombe planter; A. J. Leach of Johnston; Lott W. Humphery, Onslow planter and politician; and Joseph G. B. Roulhas of Wake. The meeting then adjourned until three o'clock that afternoon, when the delegates were to meet again at the Commons Hall of the Capitol.⁵⁰

The Convention resumed as scheduled that afternoon. The organization committee had rapidly completed its task, and the first order of business was Dr. Tompkins' reading of the committee's report. The report recommended the formation of a state agricultural society of North Carolina, which was to have a president, four vice presidents, a recording secretary, a corresponding secretary, and a treasurer. It also recommended the founding of agricultural societies in every county and called for a committee of ten to be appointed to draw up the by-laws and constitution for the state society.⁵¹

The Convention then proceeded to elect officers for the newly formed state society. John S. Dancy of Edgecombe, the organization's first president, headed the slate of officers elected. After his election, the president appointed a committee of eleven to draw up the constitution and by-laws of the society.⁵²

At three o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, October 19, Dr. Tompkins read the constitution and by-laws that the committee of eleven had prepared.

⁵⁰ Ibid., I, 246.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., I, 247.

The constitution declared the state organization to be named the North Carolina State Agricultural Society. It explained the duties of the various officers of the Society and contained other rules, duties, and obligations of the Society, its members, and officers.

An annual state fair, to be held near Raleigh, was called for by the by-laws, which also contained detailed instructions to be followed in establishing the fair. The fair was to be partially financed by a membership fee of five dollars required by the Society. This fee was to be collected annually. Most of the work of organizing and promoting the fair was to be done by the various committees which the by-laws empowered the president to appoint. A ten-man committee of arrangements was to make all the necessary preparations for the annual fair. The executive committee, composed of fifteen men, was to award premiums at the fair and "encourage a proper spirit of competition among the Planters, Farmers, and Mechanics of our country at the annual fair." A committee of three was responsible for obtaining a speaker to deliver an address to the Society at its annual meeting held during the fair week. The president was also empowered to appoint a chief marshal and five assistants, who were to "appear on horse back . . . to see that proper order is maintained [at the fair]."⁵³

The constitution and by-laws were quickly adopted. It was resolved by the Society that a five-man committee should be appointed to present a memorial to the General Assembly requesting funds with which the Society could carry out its plans to hold a state fair in October, 1853. Perhaps the best indication that the fair's establishment was intricately connected with the general reform movement of the eighteen-fifties was the men

⁵³ Ibid., I, 248.

appointed to this committee. Appointed were: Thomas J. Lemay, agricultural journalist and Whig reformer; Richard H. Smith; Calvin H. Wiley, state superintendent of public schools and a consistent advocate of reform; Lewis Thompson; Kenneth Rayner, progressive planter and Whig reform advocate; and, at the request of Wiley, Nicholas Washington Woodfin, planter and one of the state's leading political figures. After passing several other minor resolutions, the Society adjourned until the following October. ⁵⁴

The five-man committee appointed to write the memorial accomplished its task within a few weeks of the Society's adjournment. The document was sent to the legislature in November. Tompkins published the memorial in the November, 1852, issue of the Farmer's Journal. The memorial was short and to the point. It pointed out to the General Assembly that North Carolina was behind her sister states in agricultural and industrial development but stated that there were "visible signs of an awakening among our people" that could be greatly aided by a properly endowed state agricultural society. The memorial reminded the General Assembly that the majority of the people of the state were farmers or mechanics. The appeal ended with the statement that if the General Assembly should refuse to aid the newly formed organization it could not hope to survive. ⁵⁵

Tompkins' efforts to establish a state society and fair were officially achieved on December 27, 1852. On that date the General Assembly formally incorporated the North Carolina State Agricultural Society. The act of incorporation allowed the Society to hold property valued up to \$50,000 and stipulated that the rules and by-laws of the Society were to continue

⁵⁴ Ibid., I, 249-50.

⁵⁵ Ibid., I, 250-51.

in force until changed by that organization.⁵⁶ So important did the idea of promoting a fair loom in the formation of the Society that the charter issued to it by special act of the legislature stated that the Society was to hold an annual fair to promote agricultural and industrial development in the state. The Society was required to use all the funds it acquired for the sole purpose of promoting agricultural and industrial development.⁵⁷

With the North Carolina State Agricultural Society a legally incorporated concern and with hopes of obtaining aid from the General Assembly creating an air of enthusiasm, the agricultural leaders of the state began to look forward to and plan for the first annual North Carolina State Fair, a fair which was to have a large impact on the agricultural reform movement throughout the state and become a popular event in the lives of thousands of North Carolina's farmers.

⁵⁶ Laws of North Carolina (1852), pp. 3-4.

⁵⁷ North Carolina Historical Commission, A Manual of North Carolina (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell and Company, State Printers, 1913), p. 178.

CHAPTER II

THE ANTE-BELLUM FAIR

The North Carolina State Agricultural Society's announcement that it intended to stage a state fair in October of 1853 sounded somewhat presumptuous, especially since that body had been in existence less than a year and was composed of only a handful of members. In addition to its short history and small size, the Society was faced with the basic problems of acquiring the capital with which to finance the fair, obtaining land on which to hold the fair, constructing buildings to house exhibits, and providing accommodations for both exhibitors and visitors. Rules and regulations governing exhibits had to be established, entrance fees determined, and a premium list published. These tasks seemed much too formidable for the small, young Society that existed in the spring of 1853.

The major problem confronting the Society in its attempt to establish an annual fair was lack of finances, which threatened not only the successful establishment of the fair, but the very existence of the Society itself. No capital stock was provided for in the charter issued by the legislature to the Society.¹ The memorial requesting state funds which had been sent by the Society in 1852 to the legislature had obtained no results whatever. A resolution introduced in the Senate to appropriate \$1,000 to the Society had hardly been considered.

The Society had only thirty members by February, 1853, each of whom had paid five dollars to join. Should they pay the annual dues of five

¹North Carolina Historical Commission, A Manual of North Carolina (Raleigh: E. M. Ussell and Company, State Printers, 1913), p. 178. Hereinafter cited as N. C. Historical Commission, A Manual of N. C.

dollars per year, the Society would have only three hundred dollars with which to sponsor its first fair in the fall of 1853.² The Farmer's Journal in February, 1853, appealed to the farmers of the state to join the Society. It also asked the people of Raleigh to help support the fair, as it would be a definite financial advantage to them.³ Despite the lack of finances, the Society continued to plan for a state fair to be held in October, 1853.

Fortunately, the Society was able to obtain funds from other sources. It persuaded the Wake County Commissioners to aid the cause of the proposed fair financially. The commissioners agreed to pay one-half of the amount needed to obtain land and buildings for the fair, provided that their cost did not exceed the sum of five thousand dollars. The Society was required to match this donation with subscriptions from its members and other interested parties.⁴ The city of Raleigh evidently offered to donate a tract of land to the Society to be used as the fair grounds, but no clear title to this land seems to have been given the Society. Money with which to prepare for the first fair was obtained by securing loans from individuals who agreed to accept bonds the Society would issue.⁵

The Society began its preparations for a state fair with the money obtained from its subscribers and the Wake County donation. The original fair grounds obtained from the city by the Society were a sixteen acre

² Farmer's Journal, I (February, 1853), 346.

³ Ibid., p. 347.

⁴ Helen D. Wilkin, "The Promotion of Agriculture in North Carolina, 1810-1860" (unpublished master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1941), p. 112. Hereinafter cited as Wilkin, "Promotion of Agriculture."

⁵ N. C. Historical Commission, A Manual of N. C., p. 178.

tract in the eastern suburbs of Raleigh, within one mile of the Capitol.⁶ The original fair's buildings were constructed during the summer of 1853. Floral Hall, which was the main building, was fifty by one hundred feet. The building was to be used throughout the ante-bellum period to exhibit household manufactures, floral arrangements, fruits, fancy needle work, pantry goods, and other miscellaneous goods, many of which were produced by the fairer sex, who seemed to control the building. Farmer's and Mechanic's Hall was seventy-five by thirty feet.⁷ It was used to display machinery, field crops, and agricultural implements. Besides the two main buildings, the Society constructed a "refreshment room" for the ladies which was built near Floral Hall, and wells were sunk to supply the fair-goers with water.⁸

With the grounds acquired, the buildings constructed, and some money in the treasury, the Society was in a position to stage the first fair. The fair opened its gates officially at 12:00 P.M., Tuesday, October 18, 1853.⁹ The North Carolina Standard estimated that over eight hundred entries were placed on exhibit, but only five hundred and eighty-three items were listed officially by the Society.¹⁰ The entire premium list for the first fair amounted to a grand total of only \$524.00.¹¹

⁶ Ibid., p. 115.

⁷ The News and Observer, October 18, 1956.

⁸ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 12, 1853.

⁹ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 19, 1853.

¹⁰ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 26, 1853.

¹¹ Cornelius O. Cathey, Agricultural Developments in North Carolina, 1783-1860 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 83.

The Society's rules governing the fair were in part designed to improve the financial condition of that organization. All exhibitors were forced to join the Society if they wished to contend for premiums; thus, each contender for a premium gave the Society five dollars with which to help finance the premium for which he contended. Entrance fees at the gate were set at twenty-five cents per person, one dollar per carriage, and fifty cents per buggy.¹²

One of the major factors in the successful establishment of the state fair in 1853 was the co-operation extended to the Society by the railroad systems of the state. The Wilmington and Walden Railroad offered a special fare of one-half regular rates to visitors to the fair and agreed to carry all goods for exhibit at the fair free of charge. The company even ran a special train to pick up exhibits on the Saturday before the fair.¹³ The Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad also carried exhibits free of charge and gave special rates to the fair-goers. Articles from the Plymouth area were brought by boat, at the expense of the Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad, up the Roanoke River to railway stations.¹⁴ This co-operation on the part of the railroads continued to a greater or lesser degree throughout the nineteenth century.

The 1853 fair was hailed as a great success by the papers of the day. The Raleigh Register said that the success of future fairs was guaranteed as a result of the reception given the first fair.¹⁵ An editorial in the North Carolina Standard stated that the fair was evidence of the vast

¹² Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 8, 1853.

¹³ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 19, 1853.

¹⁴ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 5, 1853.

¹⁵ Ibid., October 22, 1853.

resources of the state and showed that North Carolina was beginning to move to a higher position among her sister states. In the same issue of the Standard was published an excerpt from a Wilmington paper which maintained that the fair should have started twenty years earlier and suggested that the person responsible for the establishment of the fair be called a great benefactor of the state.¹⁶

The annual meeting of the North Carolina State Agricultural Society coincided with the fair in 1853 and continued to do so throughout the century. At this meeting the Society immediately began to make plans for the next year's fair. President John S. Dancy appointed a committee of five to obtain a deed for the fair grounds from the Raleigh City Council. The committee was to report at the end of the fair week, but failed to do so.¹⁷ The president also appointed Jeremiah Nixon, William R. Pool, and John Hutchins, all leaders in the Society, to care for the grounds and have them in shape for the 1854 fair. Richard H. Smith was elected president for 1854. John Hutchins became treasurer, a position he was to hold throughout the ante-bellum period. Thomas J. Lenny was elected corresponding secretary.¹⁸

Despite the lack of financial aid from the state, the Society continued to make preparations for the 1854 fair. During the spring of 1854 new buildings were constructed at the fair grounds. An amphitheater was added, and in April construction was begun on additional stalls for livestock exhibits.¹⁹ No other major buildings were constructed, however, as long as the Society continued to hold the fair on the original grounds.

¹⁶ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 26, 1853.

¹⁷ Ibid., November 2, 1853.

¹⁸ Farmer's Journal, II (November, 1853), 225-234.

¹⁹ Wilkin, "Promotion of Agriculture," p. 113; Farmer's Journal, III (April, 1854), 20.

The 1854 fair was staged with what money the Society was able to raise from loans and membership dues. It offered a slightly larger premium list, had more exhibits, and drew larger crowds than did the first fair.²⁰ Both the Society and the press considered it a huge success.

At the Society meeting that year Thomas Ruffin was elected president, a position he was to hold until 1899. A lawyer, judge, Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, and gentleman farmer, Ruffin was one of the leading figures of ante-bellum North Carolina and certainly a man of great ability. Ruffin made the fair into an institution of the people of the state during his presidency. When Ruffin took over the office of the president, the treasurer's report for 1854 revealed that the Society had in its treasury \$4,886.00 received from gate receipts, dues, and donations. This entire sum was used to cover the expenses of the 1854 fair. As a result, the Society had nothing with which to prepare for the 1855 fair.²¹

The fact that the Society used the receipts of the fair of any given year to cover that fair's expenses, thus leaving little if any funds for the promotion of the fair for the following year, kept the Society constantly in debt. This problem was one of the few that the Society was unable to solve during the nineteenth century. Indeed, late in 1854 it looked as though this problem was going to destroy both the Society and its fair, despite the fact that two successive fairs had already been staged. In November, 1854, Dr. Edward A. Crudup, Chairman of the Executive Committee, asked Ruffin to call a special meeting of the Society to see if state aid could be obtained. By December 2, the Society was in debt \$1,000.00 and Crudup recommended to Ruffin that the Society borrow money on the member's

²⁰ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 15, 1854.

²¹ Ibid., October 25, 1854.

individual bonds, as had been done in 1853,²² Ruffin had no choice but to agree with Crudup's suggestion, and by the end of December, Crudup had obtained the needed money.²³

Early in January, 1855, the special meeting was called. Members of the Society who were in the Legislature were requested to encourage their fellow law makers to visit the meeting, which was held in Raleigh. It was hoped that the visitors might obtain a better understanding of the Society's goals and ambitions, and thus be influenced to grant the Society some type of financial aid.²⁴

At the meeting the Society prepared and sent another memorial to the legislature requesting state financial support. The memorial stressed the fact that the Society had, by its own efforts, sponsored two successful fairs, but that expenses incurred in so doing had left it in debt. Other southern states, the memorial argued, had recognized the value of state societies and society-sponsored fairs and granted them aid. Could not North Carolina, the majority of whose citizens were farmers and mechanics, do likewise? The appeal ended by declaring that without financial aid from the state, the Society would fail.²⁵

The visiting legislators and the Society's memorial evidently had their effect. On February 10, 1855, the Legislature passed an act which

²² Edward A. Crudup to Thomas Ruffin, October 30 and December 2, 1854, in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, (ed.), The Papers of Thomas Ruffin (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Co., 1918), II, 440-41. Hereinafter cited as Hamilton, The Ruffin Papers.

²³ Edward A. Crudup to Thomas Ruffin, December 26, 1854, in ibid., II, 446-47.

²⁴ Arator, I (April 2, 1855), 17-23.

²⁵ "Memorial from the State Agricultural Society," Executive and Legislative Documents of North Carolina (1854-55), Dec. No. 22, II, 229-35.

directed the public treasurer to pay to the treasurer of the Society, each year on the first Monday in October, the sum of fifteen hundred dollars. The Society was required by the act to raise a like sum during each year and to present a certificate proving that this requirement had been fulfilled. The money from the state was to be used for premiums which, according to the judgment of the Society, would best encourage and promote the advancement of agriculture and industry in North Carolina.²⁶ This was a vital step forward for the Society, for it guaranteed a sum of \$3,000 with which to plan and arrange the coming fair, thus removing much of the pressure of having to depend on the income of a fair to pay the expenses incurred in planning and promoting it.

Though the state legislators had acquired some interest in the fortunes of the Society and the fair, the citizens of Raleigh by 1855 seemed to have lost what little interest in the fair they had developed in the past two years. The leaders of the Society sensed this change of attitude and were greatly concerned about it. They realized that the support of the citizens of Raleigh was necessary if the fair were to be successfully continued. Late in September of 1855 Grudup wrote Ruffin that the people of Raleigh had developed an attitude of total apathy concerning the fair. They had, continued Grudup, done nothing to provide accommodations for fair-goers, and were unlikely to do so. Grudup feared that the 1855 fair would be the last unless the attitude of the people of Raleigh changed. As a result of this belief, Grudup tried to obtain some support for the fair by holding mass meetings in Raleigh to promote the fair, but to no avail.²⁷

²⁶ Laws of North Carolina (1854-55), p. 3.

²⁷ Edward A. Grudup to Thomas Ruffin, September 22 and October 3, 1855, in Hamilton, The Ruffin Papers, II, 493-96.

The question of obtaining a deed for the fair grounds from the city of Raleigh remained unsettled. The topic was discussed at the Society's special meeting in 1855. Dr. Grubup called attention to the problem, saying that the land had been donated by the city of Raleigh to the Society and that the commissioners of that city were ready to make the Society a deed for the land. As a result, a committee was appointed to secure the deed from the city if a committee appointed for the same purpose at the 1854 fair had not previously done so.²⁸ Raleigh, however, did not give the Society a deed for the fair grounds until 1869 and even then granted a conditional one.

Despite the apathetic attitude of Raleigh's citizens, the 1855 fair was successfully staged. Through Thursday, October 18, the fair had, from all sources, including state aid, \$4,522.96 on hand, with Friday still to go. The Society had 418 members compared with thirty-three in 1853.²⁹ Their membership fees substantially aided the Society's treasury in meeting the expenses of the fair. It was expected that several new members would be obtained on Friday. Partly as a result of state aid and partly as a result of the financial success of the fair, the Society in 1855 reduced the membership fee to only two dollars.³⁰ Though still on unsure financial ground, the Society had avoided total collapse and insured the continuation of the fair.

The fair continued, under the leadership of Ruffin, to grow throughout the ante-bellum period. Each year the crowds were larger, the exhibits more numerous, and the financial returns greater. In the 1857 October meeting

²⁸ Arator, I (April 2, 1855), 17-23.

²⁹ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 24, 1855.

³⁰ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 24, 1855.

of the Society, a lifetime membership was offered for a fee of twenty dollars. Donations that year were heavy, with eleven men giving fifty dollars each. The members of the Society, however, continued to feel that the state should increase its aid as the Maryland and South Carolina societies were receiving much more state aid than the General Assembly of North Carolina saw fit to give.³¹ In 1858 the Society enrolled 680 members as compared with 575 in 1857. The Society received in gate receipts for one day alone over \$900, and the gate receipts for the entire week ran close to \$3,000, some \$300 more than the receipts of 1857. Yet despite this success, the Society remained in financial trouble and continued to press for more aid from the legislature, giving the executive committee a free hand to obtain the desired aid by whatever methods they felt necessary.³²

The number of exhibits displayed at the fair grew steadily with each fair. The following chart illustrates the rapid increase of exhibits shown in each of the major buildings on the grounds.³³

<u>Exhibits</u>	<u>1857</u>	<u>1858</u>	<u>1859</u>
Livestock.....	203	229	252
Planter's Hall.....	144	200	246
Mechanic's Hall.....	170	321	305
Floral Hall.....	<u>319</u>	<u>513</u>	<u>541</u>
	836	1,263	1,344

The crowds also increased with each successive fair, and by 1858 there were as many as 8,000 people attending the fair.³⁴

³¹ Transactions of the North Carolina Agricultural Society for 1857 (Raleigh: Holden and Wilson, "Standard Office," 1858), pp. 9-14.

³² North Carolina Planter, I (November, 1858), 357-59.

³³ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 26, 1859.

³⁴ Ibid., October 27, 1858.

Though the fair continued to have financial trouble, by 1859 it had become so successful that other towns were interested in obtaining it for themselves. Henry M. Pritchard of Mecklenburg County introduced in the House of the General Assembly in February of 1859 an amendment to a resolution in favor of the North Carolina State Agricultural Society asking that the exposition not be held in the same town more than two consecutive years. Pritchard requested that Charlotte be allowed to obtain the fair for the next year, if it would provide sufficient accommodations. His amendment was voted down, 53 to 32.³⁵ At the Society meeting during the 1859 fair, it was moved that the fair be held in Salisbury, but the motion was withdrawn when it was learned that it would be necessary for the legislature to amend the by-laws and constitution of the Society to make relocation of the fair possible.³⁶ A committee was appointed, however, to see if the legislature could be persuaded to amend the constitution and by-laws in such a manner that the fair could be transferred to other towns.³⁷

During the 1860 meeting of the Society, a committee appointed by the new president, William R. Holt, was requested to appeal to the Legislature on behalf of the Society for a new and better act of incorporation, one which would stimulate the growth of the Society.³⁸ Yet despite this note of optimism and the rapid physical growth of the past few years, the fair closed out the ante-bellum period in rather serious financial trouble. The weather was bad on the final day of the 1860 fair, almost eliminating

³⁵ Journal of the House of Commons of North Carolina, Session of 1858-59 (Raleigh: Holden and Wilson, Printers to the State, 1859), p. 547.

³⁶ Weekly Raleigh Register, October 26, 1859.

³⁷ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 26, 1859.

³⁸ Ibid., October 24, 1860.

gate receipts. As a result it was evident by November, 1860, that the Society would have a deficit of seven or eight hundred dollars after paying all premiums and bills for upkeep of the grounds. President Holt felt that the fair would not have gotten into trouble had the weather remained fair. But as this was not the case, he wanted the executive committee to hold a special meeting to try to solve the financial problem that had developed.³⁹ The coming of the Civil War, however, would soon overshadow the Society's interest in the problems of the fair, financial or otherwise.

The fair's physical growth during the ante-bellum period was remarkable. Both the number of exhibits displayed and the amount of money offered as premiums at the first fair were doubled within this short seven year period. The crowds grew progressively larger with each consecutive fair. Raleigh's early apathetic attitude toward the fair was in large part overcome, especially after the highly successful fair of 1856. Though the fair's financial situation was still far from solid, some substantial gains were made in that area.

The fair was able to progress so rapidly largely because its leadership during the ante-bellum era was excellent. Besides Thomas Ruffin and John Hutchins, such men as Weldon N. Edwards, Paul C. Cameron, and Kenneth Rayner, all political leaders of the state, gave their unqualified support to the fair and the Society. Ruffin, however, was by far the leading figure in the development of the ante-bellum fair. By merely accepting the office he lent great prestige to the Society. Ruffin's retirement from the bench in 1852 allowed him to devote his full time to the management of his Alamance County plantation and his work in the Society,

³⁹ W. R. Holt to Thomas Ruffin, November 30, 1860, in Hamilton, The Ruffin Papers, III, 103.

especially after he was elected president in 1854. It was under his leadership that the Society obtained aid from the state. He lost no opportunity to advance the interest of the Society. Since he was the president of the Society when five of the eight ante-bellum fairs were held, he naturally greatly influenced the fair's development.

Agricultural journalists such as John F. Tompkins and Thomas J. Lemay were also extremely active in the Society. All the agricultural journals of the state during this period gave their enthusiastic support to the fair, as did many of the newspapers.⁴⁰ The agricultural journals and the newspapers were the major medium by which the Society could reach the masses, and without their support the fair would have failed. The journals pushed the fair and the Society the year round, not just during the months of September and October. They would begin running articles on the coming fair as early as April and constantly urged the farmer to attend the fair and take his family.

Other less personal factors greatly contributed to the growth of the ante-bellum fair. The interest shown in the fair by the legislature gave it a financial boost at a very critical period. Without this aid it is extremely doubtful if the fair would have survived. The co-operation received from the railroads of the state greatly aided the development of the fair. Their policy of carrying exhibits free of charge certainly encouraged farmers to enter their products, and the low fares offered to the fair's visitors were instrumental in attracting visitors to it. The fact that North Carolina needed such an institution also helped make the ante-bellum fair a success.

⁴⁰ Wesley H. Wallace, "North Carolina's Agricultural Journals, 1838-1861: A Crusading Press," The North Carolina Historical Review, XXXVI (July, 1959), 294-95.

The general reform spirit that prevailed in North Carolina during the decade from 1850 to 1860 was also undoubtedly a basic factor in the fair's successful establishment. This reform spirit, which permeated both the state's economic and social life, began after the state constitutional reforms of 1835, but reached its height in the fifties. Among the many reforms of the years between 1848 and 1860 were the establishment of the State Hospital for the Insane, the adoption of free male suffrage, the completion of four major railroads, and the creation of the office of the state superintendent of schools.⁴¹ This spirit of reform slowly carried over into the state's agricultural life. The publication of five agricultural journals within this period, the North Carolina Farmer, the Carolina Cultivator, the Arator, the North Carolina Planter, and the Farmer's Journal, attests to this fact. Though many of the state's farmers still clung to the outdated agricultural methods of their fathers, more and more began to show an interest in agricultural reforms. This was especially true since the state's improvement of its transportation system had made farming a more promising venture. This awakening of the North Carolina farmer, caused by the general social and economic awakening of the state, had much to do with the fair's successful establishment and its continued success during the ante-bellum period.

⁴¹For a concise discussion of the reform era from 1835 to 1860 see Hugh T. Lefler and Albert R. Newsome, North Carolina, The History of a Southern State (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), pp. 343-390.

CHAPTER III

GROWTH AND PROBLEMS OF THE POSTWAR FAIR

The Civil War quickly arrested the fair's rapid development and nearly resulted in its total destruction. Most of the State Agricultural Society's members and officers, many of whom were among the state's leading citizens, were soon engulfed in the state's war efforts. As a result, the Society and its fair became completely defunct during the war years. The fair's grounds and buildings, however, continued to serve the citizens of the state during the conflict. Camp Ellis, the state's first camp of instruction for volunteer troops, was established on the grounds.¹ The buildings were converted into the state's first Confederate hospital.² This aid to the Confederacy was to harm the Society even further inasmuch as many of its buildings were burned by Union troops during the closing weeks of the war. Those that were not completely destroyed were partially damaged.³ The war's end did not result in the immediate re-establishment of the fair, for the hard times of Reconstruction delayed for four years the reorganization of the Society.

The memories of the successful ante-bellum fairs and the belief of the fair's supporters that North Carolina needed an agricultural exposition were not destroyed by the war, and the poverty of Reconstruction was unable

¹ State Journal (Raleigh), April 27, 1861.

² H. H. Cunningham, "Edmund Burke Haywood and Raleigh's Confederate Hospitals," North Carolina Historical Review, XXIV (April, 1958), 153-57.

³ Kemp P. Battle, Memories of an Old Time Tar Heel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), p. 224. Hereinafter cited as Battle, Memories of an Old Time Tar Heel.

to prevent indefinitely its re-establishment. Plans for reviving the fair appeared as early as February, 1869. Thomas Ruffin was then asked by R. A. Hamilton if it were not desirable to revive the Society and its fair, as the state needed more than ever "those pleasant and successful reunions before the war."⁴

Evidently many of the members of the ante-bellum Society agreed with these sentiments, for the Society was reorganized in the spring of 1869. The task of restoring the fair fell primarily to the Society's newly elected president, Kemp P. Battle. An extremely versatile man, Battle was a lawyer, politician, and scholar, and in later years he became president of the University of North Carolina. Battle was to prove an excellent choice for the Society's presidency. Under Battle's leadership, the Society began the task of reconstructing the fair with the \$1,500 which the state resumed paying. The city of Raleigh aided the reconstruction efforts by selling the Society the old fair grounds for the price of one dollar. Should the Society fail to hold a fair for two consecutive years, the deed stipulated that the property would revert to the city.⁵

With the money obtained from the state, its members, and interested individuals, the Society quickly restored the fair grounds to their prewar condition. In some instances the fair's physical accommodations were improved. The grounds were enlarged, the race track was extended to a length of one-half mile, burned buildings were replaced, and the buildings that had received less damage were repaired. Reconstruction was completed in

⁴R. A. Hamilton to Thomas Ruffin, February 8, 1869, in J. G. Roulhac Hamilton (ed.), The Papers of Thomas Ruffin (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1920), IV, 219-20.

⁵Wake County Register of Deeds, Register's Book 37, 1869, p. 244.

time to stage the first postwar fair in October, 1869. The re-established fair was well received by both the public and the press.⁶ As a reward for the leadership he provided in the successful attempt to re-establish the fair, Battle was twice re-elected president of the Society, though he was extremely reluctant to accept the third term. He finally agreed to retain the office because the Society could find no one suitable to replace him.⁷

Battle's reluctance to accept a third term was prompted by the criticism the fair was beginning to receive at that time. Largely because his efforts had been so successful initially, within two years of the fair's re-establishment it had outgrown its physical plant. The buildings and grounds could not adequately accommodate and house the huge crowds and numerous exhibits that the fair was attracting. Battle felt that his closest assistant, James J. Litchford, the Society's secretary, lacked the organizational ability needed to put to the best use the accommodations available.⁸ Also, by this time the fair was receiving competition from several area fairs held at Wilmington, Weldon, and several other cities by county or regional agricultural societies. These factors combined resulted in a sharp decline in the state fair's popularity within four years of its successful re-establishment.

The failure of the state to render further financial assistance to the postwar fair added to the woes of the Society. In both 1869 and 1870, Governor William W. Holden recommended to the General Assembly an increase in the amount of state funds granted the Society. He felt that the agricul-

⁶ Battle, Memories of an Old Time Tar Heel, p. 224.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

tural reforms introduced to the state by the Society and the fair would more than repay a small increase in state funds granted them.⁹

Governor Tod R. Caldwell continued the gubernatorial pleas for legislative support of the fair in 1871.¹⁰ The legislature, however, declined to increase its aid to the Society.

The seriousness of the fair's inability to provide adequate accommodations for its exhibitors and visitors was indicated by the press given the 1872 fair. After that year's fair the Reconstructed Farmer carried a devastating editorial attack on the fair's inadequate facilities. Besides finding that the grounds were too small, the editorial expressed the opinion that the buildings were "disreputable to the State." It urged the citizens of Raleigh to improve the situation. Should they refuse to do so, the article suggested that the fair cease to be called the state fair, be abandoned entirely, or be moved to another town such as Weldon, Goldsboro, Wilmington, or Charlotte. The article ended with the bitter statement that "as long as you have a Floral Hall better fitted for a shuck house than anything else, you need not expect an exhibition creditable to North Carolina."¹¹

Several papers joined the Reconstructed Farmer in its criticism of the fair, among them the Raleigh Daily Sentinel.¹² In the face of this growing criticism, the leaders of the Society realized that some definite action toward the improvement of the fair's physical facilities must be taken if it was to survive.

⁹"Governor's Message," Executive and Legislative Documents (1869-70), Doc. No. 1, p. 11; "Governor's Message," Executive and Legislative Documents (1870-71), Doc. No. 1, p. 10.

¹⁰"Governor's Message," Executive and Legislative Documents (1871-72), Doc. No. 1, p. 24.

¹¹Reconstructed Farmer, IV (November, 1872), 987-88.

¹²Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 23, 1871.

The job of revitalizing the state fair fell upon Thomas M. Holt, who was elected president of the Society in 1872. Holt held this position for eleven years. As the owner of the Alamance Cotton Mills, he was a wealthy man. Like Battle, he was a versatile man, interested in industry, politics, and agriculture, though agriculture was a secondary interest. His political career would later culminate in his serving as governor of the state.¹³

Under Holt's leadership the Society decided to move the fair to a new, larger site near Raleigh. This idea had been advanced as early as 1869 by J. Britton Smith, one of the leaders of the Society's reorganization.¹⁴ Until this time this plan had been rejected, but circumstances now forced the Society to adopt it.

Whether prompted by fear of the financial loss that would result from the fair being moved to another town or by civic pride, Raleigh chose to help the floundering fair. On November 15, 1872, the city of Raleigh for the second time sold the old fair grounds to the Society for the price of one dollar. The deed thus received by the Society, unlike that obtained from the first sale, was free of any restrictions.¹⁵

The private citizens of Raleigh also aided the Society in its efforts to re-locate the fair. Sallie E. Brown agreed to sell the Society as much land as it desired, up to fifty acres, at the price of fifty dollars per acre. The land offered the Society was ideally situated on the Chapel Hill Road, three-quarters of a mile west of the Capitol and next to the rail

¹³Samuel A. Ashe (ed.), Biographical History of North Carolina (Greensboro: Charles L. Van Noppen, Publisher, 1902), VII, 190-196.

¹⁴Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 27, 1869.

¹⁵Wake County Register of Deeds, Register's Book 35, 1872-73, pp. 8-10.

lines of the North Carolina Railroad.¹⁶ The Society was given until May 25, 1873 to decide if they would purchase the land, and if so, how much of the acreage. On that date the Society bought 26.22 acres of the Brown tract paying \$470.75 in cash and agreeing to pay an equal sum in November.¹⁷ On October 21, 1873, the final deed for the Brown land was acquired by the Society.¹⁸ In April, 1873, the Society had purchased an additional tract of land from Timothy Lee and his wife.¹⁹

The sale of the old fair grounds was begun as soon as a clear deed for it was obtained from the city of Raleigh. The Society planned to use the money obtained from the sale of the old fair grounds to purchase the new. Several persons quickly purchased lots on the old grounds.²⁰ None of the sales were for cash, and several of the purchasers were unable to pay off the mortgage on the lots they purchased. Thus the Society obtained little quick capital from the sale of the old fair grounds. It was for this reason that the Society was unable to pay for the Brown tract until November, 1873. Yet the value of this land provided the Society with the financial security needed to carry out its plans to acquire a new site.

Using the money obtained primarily from subscriptions and a heavy mortgage on the new grounds, the Society began constructing buildings on its

¹⁶The site is at present an industrial and residential area on Hillsboro Street between Home Street and Brooks Avenue across from the North Carolina State College campus.

¹⁷Wake County Register of Deeds, Register's Book 35, 1872-73, pp. 8-10.

¹⁸Wake County Register of Deeds, Register's Book 36, 1873, pp. 663-64.

¹⁹Wake County Register of Deeds, Register's Book 35, 1872-73, p. 649.

²⁰Wake County Register of Deeds, Register's Book 36, 1873, pp. 96-98.

newly acquired grounds in the spring of 1873. Four buildings were constructed for offices, two at each of the principal entrances to the grounds. An octagonal exhibit hall of two stories became the main building. The center of this building became the new Floral Hall, and its two wings became Planter's and Mechanic's Halls. A grandstand 300 by 44 feet was erected. It contained three stories, the first to be used as office space, the other two for spectators. The second floor alone seated 3,000 persons. A new Machinery Hall, a one story building 200 by 44 feet, was constructed. Other buildings constructed included a two story conservatory, a judge's stand, a portable speaker's stand, 200 stalls for horses and cattle, and seventy-five pens for sheep and swine. A new one-half mile race track was constructed, thus completing the physical plant.²¹

The new grounds and buildings were in readiness for the 1873 fair. Their development had cost the Society nearly \$50,000. The grounds covered a total of fifty-five acres, over three times the acreage of the old fair grounds.²² The fair was destined to be held on these grounds until 1925 when it was moved to its present site.

The 1873 fair proved to be a complete success. From that year until the eighteen-nineties the fair continued to grow, adding to its physical plant the facilities required by its increasing popularity. In 1874 the Society added a hundred stalls for cattle and horses and twenty-five pens²³ for swine and sheep to house the growing number of livestock exhibits.

²¹ Rules, Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Thirteenth Grand Annual Fair of the North Carolina Agricultural Society to Commence Monday, October 13th, 1873, on the Grounds of the Society (Raleigh: Stone and Ussell, Printers, 1873), pp. viii-x.

²² Ibid.

²³ Rules, Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Fourteenth Annual Exposition of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, October 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17, 1874 (Raleigh: News Publishing Company, 1874), p. vii.

In 1879 the stock stables were rearranged in order that the public might examine the livestock exhibits more easily. Trees were planted to beautify the grounds, more wells were dug, and a new road was built to the northeast entrance.²⁴

Also added in 1879 was a building for the use of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. The building served two major purposes. First, it provided the department with the space to exhibit agricultural products from each of the state's counties. Second, it provided the department with a place to present awards to the winning exhibits in the classes for which it offered premiums.²⁵ Leonidas L. Polk, first commissioner of agriculture, had begun the department's exhibits at the fair in 1877, the year of the department's formation.

The fair's popularity in the seventies and early eighties resulted in an increase in its financial assets. In 1877 the fair's management discontinued the old admission charge based on carriages and buggies and adopted an admission price per person which was set at fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children.²⁶ This change in policy allowed the Society to greatly increase its gate receipts. In 1879, aided by a \$2,000 subscription from the citizens of Raleigh, the Society was able to

²⁴Farmer and Mechanic (Raleigh), October 16, 1879.

²⁵James F. Kretschmann, "The North Carolina Department of Agriculture, 1877-1900" (unpublished master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1955), p. 68. Hereinafter cited as Kretschmann, "N. C. Department of Agriculture."

²⁶Rules, Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Seventeenth Annual Exposition of the North Carolina Agricultural Society at Raleigh, N. C. (Raleigh: John Nichols, Book and Job Printer, 1877) p. 20.

offer a premium list of \$4,500 in cash.²⁷ The highly successful fair of 1882 netted \$8,000 for the Society, and the Society hoped that this large sum would allow it to reduce its debt by as much as one half.²⁸

The Society's hopes were not fulfilled. Despite the increased receipts resulting from the fair's popularity, the Society was in desperate financial trouble by 1883. The Society had acquired a debt of over \$20,000. It had borrowed \$10,000 from its president, Thomas M. Holt, and an equal sum from the North Carolina Insurance Company. It also owed money to other creditors. Though the Society had been able to pay the interest on these debts each year, little headway had been made toward reducing the principal. The 1883 fair was not particularly successful, and some of the Society's creditors began to demand their money. As a result of these demands, the Society made an assignment of all its cash to treasurer Leo D. Heart, who was instructed to pay premiums and current expenses from this sum. The remainder was to be given to William C. Upchurch, David G. Fowle, A. Croach, and Robert F. Hoke, each of whom was an assignee or trustee of a judgment against the Society held by several banks and one individual.²⁹

The moderate success of the 1883 fair and the financial crisis it caused prompted the leading citizens of the state to sponsor a State Exposition the next year. A delegation of Northern visitors was expected to be in the state during October of 1884, and it was feared that the fair could not adequately impress upon them the state's agricultural and industrial growth. Planned to be held on the fair grounds during the entire

²⁷ Farmer and Mechanic (Raleigh), October 16, 1879.

²⁸ Ibid., October 25, 1882.

²⁹ Ibid., October 24, 1883.

month of October, the Exposition was to be a giant display of the state's industrial and agricultural development designed to impress upon the people of the state and its visitors the rapid growth of North Carolina.

Plans for the Exposition were quickly executed. To house the larger exhibits, a huge Central Exhibition Hall was constructed. The major exhibit was the North Carolina Department of Agriculture's 5,000 item North Carolina exhibit which had been displayed at the 1883 Boston Exposition.³⁰ Other smaller buildings for lesser displays were also erected.³¹ The total cost of the buildings erected for the 1884 Exposition was \$12,000.³¹

The Exposition was planned and executed by private citizens, with the citizens of Raleigh most active in the planning. Though located on the fair grounds, the Exposition buildings were the property of neither the Society nor the State. They were owned by private stock holders who had financed the cost of their construction.³²

The Exposition was a success, running the entire month of October as planned. No separate state fair was held that year. But as it was legally necessary for the Society to give premiums with the \$1,500 obtained each year from the state, one week of the Exposition was designated fair week.³³

The Exposition seemed to give the fair a needed boost by arousing in the people of the state a general interest in fairs and expositions. After

³⁰ Kretschmann, "N. C. Department of Agriculture," p. 99.

³¹ Plans of Buildings, Rules and Regulations Governing Exhibitors at the North Carolina State Exposition, Raleigh, N. C., October 1st to October 25th, 1884. (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton and Company, Steam Printers and Binders, 1884), p. 15.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 1.

the 1884 Exposition, the fair's growth quickened somewhat and continued each year until the nineties. By the late eighteen-eighties the fair was drawing crowds of 8,000 to 10,000 people per day and was displaying thousands of exhibits from all parts of the state. The fair's increasing social activities were also partly responsible for the fair's growing popularity.

With the exceptions of minor additions to the existing buildings and repairs, the physical growth of the fair during the nineteenth century terminated with two transactions involving the fair and two of the state's agricultural institutions. In 1885 the Department of Agriculture purchased ten acres of land from the Society at fifty dollars per acre to be used as an experimental farm by the Department's Agricultural Experiment Station.³⁴ The Society allowed the department to use, rent free, twenty-five additional acres for the same purpose.³⁵ The use of this same land on the same terms was offered to North Carolina State College in 1887. The Exposition Building, located on the fair grounds, was donated to the college by its stock holders. These offers were made as a part of the successful attempt to secure the college for the Raleigh area.³⁶

The fair's continued growth enabled the Society in 1890 to bill the fair as the "Largest Fair in the South." Advertising methods had become fairly modern and included the use of posters, hand bills, and free tickets.

³⁴Report of the Board of Agriculture to the General Assembly of North Carolina, Session of 1887 (Raleigh: P. M. Hale, State Printer and Binder, 1887), pp. 11-12.

³⁵Agricultural Experiment Station, North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, The First 60 Years (Raleigh: Published by the author, 1955), p. 27.

³⁶David A. Lockmiller, The History of the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering of the University of North Carolina (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1939), p. 39.

The fair was pictured as a place where the entire family could enjoy a day of good, clean fun.³⁷ After 1890 the fair's increasing social activities contributed greatly to its continued popularity.

Yet despite the upswing in its popularity, the fair was unable to escape financial troubles. In 1895 the merchants and citizens of Raleigh raised \$3,000 and donated it to the Society to be used for the payment of back debts.³⁸ But by July, 1896, the Society had used all this money plus the receipts from the 1895 fair and needed money to prepare for the fair of 1896.³⁹ The Society was forced to borrow \$200 for this purpose.³⁹ With this sum the Society constructed new steps for the grandstands, added more stalls, and repaired Floral Hall.⁴⁰

Bennehan Cameron, gentleman farmer, leading social figure, and a member of one of the state's most prominent families, was elected president of the Society in 1895 partly because it was hoped that he could improve the fair's financial situation. Largely because of his efforts the 1896 fair was able to pay all its expenses but could only slightly reduce its debt. And, as usual, very little remained with which to prepare for the fair of 1895. As of January 7, 1897, the Society had on hand a balance of only \$10.74. This, however, represented a slight improvement over the 1895 fair's balance sheet, for in that year the fair had to postpone the payment of \$18.45 in premiums.⁴¹

³⁷ Handbills in the Aaron A. F. Seawell Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

³⁸ News and Observer, October 20, 1896.

³⁹ John Nichols to Bennehan Cameron, July 16, 1896, in Cameron Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

⁴⁰ John Nichols to Bennehan Cameron, September 4, 1896, in ibid.

⁴¹ John Nichols to Bennehan Cameron, January 11, 1897, in ibid.

The financial problem continued to hamper the fair's development during the last few years of the century. Society leaders after 1896 attempted without success to improve the fair's financial standings. In 1897 Richard H. Battle, the Society's newly elected president, was assigned the task of improving the fair's finances. He was replaced in 1898 by Colonel John Cunningham who also tried to advance the fair financially. But in 1899 the Society still had a bonded debt of \$26,000. Yet there was an atmosphere of hope prevailing among the Society's leaders. The gate receipts that year were thirty per cent above those of 1898, and the Society was able to declare a dividend and make payment of interest on its bonds. Claude Baker Denson, treasurer of the Society for several years, stated that the bond holders should realize that the fair was improving financially and wait for "the inevitable advance in the price of bonds."⁴² Despite Denson's encouraging announcement, bonds were then selling at the extremely low price of twenty-five cents on the dollar.⁴³

Though the fair was never out of financial trouble during the entire nineteenth century, the increase in exhibits and attendance was phenomenal. By the turn of the century the fair was firmly established and supported by most of the state. In the late eighteen-nineties the fair was drawing crowds numbering as high as 20,000 per day, or double the daily attendance of the eighteen-eighties. The exhibits reflected every phase of the industrial, agricultural, educational, and social life of North Carolina. From a small concern with a \$524 premium list in 1853 the fair had become a gigantic organization requiring thousands of dollars to operate and

⁴² News and Observer, October 22, 1899.

⁴³ Official 100th Anniversary Program of the North Carolina State Fair (no place, no publisher, n. d.), p. 13. Hereinafter cited as 100th Anniversary Program of the State Fair.

bringing pleasure and instruction to thousands of people from all parts of the state.

Several factors contributed to this amazing growth. Raleigh's change of attitude toward the fair was undoubtedly a large factor in the growth of the fair during the postwar period. Without the donation of the old fair grounds from the city, it is doubtful that the fair would have survived, as money was needed for a new start and the Society had hardly any of its own. The cash donations given to the Society by the merchants and people of Raleigh enabled the Society to stave off financial complications at critical times. Though debts might not have overwhelmed the Society had it not received this aid, the money no doubt enabled the Society to spend more on the expansion of premium lists and other devices designed to attract people to the fair.

The fair was, however, unquestionably hurt by its inability to solve its financial problems. Had it not been constantly in debt, it certainly would have developed even more rapidly and attracted even better exhibits. In the realm of finance, the fair, like any other concern, was affected by the ups and downs of the national economy. The period of depression in the middle nineties resulted in a slump for the fair which was not corrected until 1899.

The enthusiasm for expositions and fairs which swept the state, the South, and the nation during the eighties and nineties greatly benefited the fair. It was during this period that the state aided the fair by entering exhibits previously displayed at expositions in other states. The State Exposition of 1884 helped renew the state's interest in fairs, and particularly in the state fair. The eighties and early nineties were

the golden ages of fairs and expositions. Some of their general popularity was naturally transferred to the state fair and was thus a large factor in the fair's popularity in the later postwar period.

Good leadership, however, was by far the most important factor in the success of the postwar fair. Some prominent North Carolinians stepped forward to take the responsibility of guiding the fair through each serious crisis that it faced. Kemp P. Battle was the first to do so when he accepted the major challenge of reviving the fair in 1869, and he set a precedent by doing an excellent job.

Next to that of Battle, Thomas M. Holt's personal leadership was invaluable to the Society during the postwar period. Serving as president of the Society from 1873 to 1884, longer than any other man in the nineteenth century, he naturally was the most influential figure in the fair's development. Holt directed the moving of the fair in 1873, which with the exception of the fair's re-establishment, was easily the most important event in the fair's postwar history. Without this change the fair would certainly have become of significance only in the Wake County area, and might have been completely abolished. It was largely because of Holt's efforts that the revised fair became so popular during the seventies and eighties. His personal loans to the Society more than once kept the fair from serious financial trouble, and his position as a manufacturer was certainly helpful in obtaining industrial exhibits for the fair.

Captain Claude Baker Denson was of great help to Holt in running the fair after 1876 when he was elected secretary of the Society. Denson continued in this position after Holt left office, and was later elected treasurer of the Society. Though never president himself, he was a leading

figure in the management of the fair throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.⁴⁴ John Nichols became a leader in the fair's management after 1895. Serving as the Society's secretary, he did much of the work connected with its organization and promotion. Presidents Bennahan Cameron, Richard Battle, and John Cunningham, along with other prominent leaders of the state, continued to give the fair excellent leadership during the late nineties. These men were all capable, intelligent, and sincerely interested in the fair. Though most of them were not farmers, but professional men and politicians, they were experienced in and capable of organization, a most important factor in an undertaking as complicated as the fair. They knew and were known by many of the leading industrialists and plantation owners of the state, and their contacts with such people undoubtedly drew many exhibits to the fair that would have been otherwise impossible to obtain. It was largely because of the efforts of these fine leaders that the fair became a firmly established institution in the lives of the people of North Carolina by the end of the nineteenth century.

⁴⁴100th Anniversary Program of the State Fair, p. 41.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE FAIR

The North Carolina State Agricultural Society had established the state fair to promote and encourage agriculture and industry in North Carolina. It was designed primarily to instruct the average farmer or mechanic in the latest scientific advances in his specific field. Yet from the very beginning the fair had a social aspect, one which was to develop to be at least as important as any other aspect of the fair. This social development started with the first fair and continued to gain momentum throughout the century.

One of the social features that was to remain a favorite with the crowds was the music provided by visiting bands. The Society hired bands to amuse the crowds of the first fair in 1853, and they proved a spectacular success.¹ The bands usually represented some town, and certain ones seemed to be favorites. During the ante-bellum period the Salisbury band, which was hired by the Society in 1858, was one of the most popular.² Most of the music provided in the ante-bellum period was of a martial strain and was thus in keeping with the Southern temperament of that era. The popularity of the bands extended into the postwar fairs. As the crowds grew larger, more bands were required to accommodate them. The Salisbury band remained a favorite, but bands from all over the state appeared at the fairs. Among the towns represented at least once by a band were Salem, Concord, Carthage, Oak City, Winston, Raleigh, and

¹Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 8, 1853.

²North Carolina Planter, I (November, 1858), 360.

Salisbury. Bands were especially popular during the late seventies and the early eighties. There were three bands at the 1876 fair,³ and in 1880 the Carthage band and the Concord brass band provided the music.⁴ Bands of all types and descriptions were invited to play at the fair, among them small bands, large bands, string bands, brass bands, marching bands, and silver cornet bands. All were evidently thoroughly enjoyed by the thousands of people who attended the fairs.

The appearance of military and semi-military drill teams was another social attraction, which, like the bands, had been popular during the ante-bellum period and which became even more so at the postwar fairs. These organizations were extremely popular toward the end of the ante-bellum period, a fact that probably reflects the South's growing militant attitude. Like the bands, these organizations represented the towns and academies of the state. At the 1855 fair there were three such groups, the Oak City Guards, the Independent Guards, and the Cadets of Mr. Lovejoy's School. Each group displayed its drilling and marching ability at the fair grounds.⁵ In 1860 a Zouave unit from the academy at Hillsboro called the Hillsboro Cadets drilled for the crowd.⁶

Defeat at the hands of the North did not stop North Carolinians from admiring things military, and the popularity of the military units was greater than ever after the war. Many of the militaristic displays were in the tradition of the lost cause, especially during the era in which the Bourbons controlled the state. Nearly every school or town in the state that had a military unit was represented at the fair, and

³Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 18, 1876.

⁴News and Observer, October 21, 1880.

⁵Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 20, 1885.

⁶Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 31, 1860.

in the Bourbon period groups were even imported from other states. Such groups appeared in increasing numbers after 1874. In that year the Bingham Cadets, the Cadets of the Horner and Graves School of Hillsboro, and the Raleigh Light Infantry appeared at the fair.⁷ In 1876 there were two groups from Raleigh, one from Wilmington, New Bern, and Fayetteville, as well as the Bingham Cadets at the fair.⁸ In 1877 Governor Wade Hampton of South Carolina and Governor Zebulon Vance of North Carolina reviewed twenty companies of such military groups on the fair grounds.⁹ In 1883 the usual North Carolina military organizations were bolstered by additional troops from Virginia,¹⁰ and in 1893 the Seventh Maryland Regiment appeared at the fair.¹¹ In 1896 this trend reached its height when the Pitt Rifles and the Franklin Guards were scheduled to fight a sham battle at the fair grounds.¹²

It is interesting to note that nearly all the military groups that appeared at the fair, both before and after the war, were of a serious nature. Though some comical groups organized along military lines did appear at the fair, they appeared infrequently and were not well received by the public. In 1854 a group called the Knights of Don Quixote was at the fair. Dressed in the brilliant colors, plumes, and trappings traditionally associated with the knights of old, they presented a splendid

⁷ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 15, 1874.

⁸ Ibid., October 19, 1876.

⁹ Goldsbrough Messenger, October 18, 1877.

¹⁰ News and Observer, October 17, 1883.

¹¹ Ibid., October 18, 1893.

¹² Ibid., October 20, 1896.

spectacle. Among the group were such figures as the Knight of the Rusty Nail, the Knight of the Enchanted Gun, and the Knight of the Jolly Nose.¹³ Another comic group, the Royal Raleigh Ringtail Rousers, appeared in 1858, dressed in rags and with pumpkin heads.¹⁴ After the war an attempt to take the military lightly was made in 1875 when the fair ended with a dress parade of the Mulligan Guards and the Grand Panjandrums of the noble order of Flapdoodles, led by the Oak City band.¹⁵

None of the above groups returned to the fair after their initial appearance. The Knights of Don Quixote had planned to return in 1855, but failed to do so. The Royal Raleigh Ringtail Rousers, who were enjoyed only by the children and Negroes at the fair, were described in a Raleigh paper as "a crowd of grotesque beings . . . unworthy of mention" except as failures. The article expressed the hope that this would be their last appearance at the fair, and it was.¹⁶ The Mulligan Guards and the Grand Panjandrums of 1875 also made only one appearance. It would seem that such colorful, pompous, and comical displays would be crowd pleasers. Their failure could indicate the unwillingness of the southern people to parody the military.

Horse racing was the most important social event at the fair throughout the century. Extremely popular before the war, racing became even more so afterward. The track at the old fair grounds was extended to a one-half mile track when the fair was revived in 1869, and a one-half mile track was constructed on the new grounds when the fair moved in

¹³ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 25, 1854.

¹⁴ Weekly Raleigh Register, October 27, 1858.

¹⁵ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 18, 1875.

¹⁶ Weekly North Carolina Standard, November 3, 1858.

1873. By 1882 the races were attracting horses not only from North Carolina but also from New York, Virginia, and South Carolina.¹⁷

The popularity of the races remained high until the early nineties, when it began to decline because of the poor quality of the horses the races were then attracting. Interest in the races remained high, however, and the Society began to seek means to attract better horses. In 1895 Bennahan Cameron was elected president of the Society partly because he was a great horseman and knew other horsemen across the country. It was hoped that Cameron could restore the races to their old grandeur. The Society was interested in restoring the races to this position not only because of the continued spectator interest in them but also because they had the potential of making money for the Society.

Upon taking office, Cameron immediately began a campaign to improve the fair's racing program. He had the Society's secretary, John Nichols, write several prominent horsemen throughout the South asking them for their suggestions as to how the program could be improved. R. E. Biggs of Arlington, Maryland, wrote Cameron that horsemen did not like to race in North Carolina because of bad tracks, poor judges, and small purses. He suggested that the fair obtain Frank B. Walker of Indianapolis, Indiana, as a starter, get competent judges, and work on the track a few weeks before the races. He proposed that the fair hold six trotting races open to all contestants for a two hundred dollar purse, one trotting race open to North Carolina horses only, and two running races of one-half and three-quarters of a mile with respective purses of one and two hundred dollars. He also suggested that the purses be paid in cash after each

¹⁷Hess and Observer, October 17, 1882.

race, with the winner getting at least fifty per cent of the purse. His last suggestion was that a racing circuit should be formed in North Carolina in order to attract better horses to the area.¹⁸ Cameron also received suggestions from John T. Biggs of Reidsville, Lycurgus L. Staton of Tarboro, G. G. Austin of Raleigh, and L. Banks Holt.

The proposals of all these men were similar to those of R. E. Biggs, with exception of those of Staton. Staton, unlike the others, bred running horses rather than trotters. Prior to 1895 some running races had been held, but the large majority of the races were trotting matches. Naturally Staton proposed that more running races be added to the program, and that some of the trotting races be dropped.¹⁹

Many of the proposals made by R. E. Biggs and the others, including the proposal to form a circuit, were adopted by the Society for the races of the 1896 fair with excellent results, for in that year the races made money for the Society, thus putting the fair association in comparatively good financial shape.²⁰ Races for gentlemen's road horses and a race for jumpers were added to the program of the 1896 races in addition to the other changes suggested.²¹ Cameron's efforts to revive the races had proved successful.

¹⁸R. E. Biggs to Bennet Cameron, December 11, 1895, in Bennet Cameron Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. Hereinafter cited as the Cameron Papers.

¹⁹John Nichols to Bennet Cameron, August 7, 1896, in *ibid.*

²⁰W. J. Carter to Bennet Cameron, January 27, 1897, in *ibid.*

²¹John Nichols to Bennet Cameron, September 4, 1896, in *ibid.*

Another event of some social significance was the annual address delivered to the Society by some prominent figure of the state. Begun in 1853 as an instructional feature, it remained largely that until just before the war. But even in the ante-bellum period it became one of the highlights of the fair's social agenda. At each of the ante-bellum fairs the attendance reached its peak on the day of the address. For it was on this day that many of the leaders of North Carolina's social life came to the fair to see and be seen. The social significance of the address even before the war can be seen in the fact that when David Outlaw failed to appear to deliver the address in 1859, Daniel M. Barringer, Thomas Fragg, Governor John W. Ellis, Charles Manly, John M. Morehead, and Walter L. Steele all made extemporaneous speeches.

After the fair was re-established in 1869 it became the custom for the governor to give the address. This practice almost completely robbed the address of any instructional value and turned it into a political and social event. When it was impossible for the governor to make the address, some other political figure usually replaced him. Neither the governors nor the various other speakers were above using this opportunity to advance their political cause. In 1893, for example, Zebulon Vance made an impassioned political address urging the farmer to desert the Populist Party and vote Democratic.

Parades, usually held on the first day of the fair, were also popular with the crowds. They had developed from the practice of having the fair marshals and the leaders of the Society, all mounted on horseback,

²²North Carolina Florist, II (November, 1859), 340.

²³News and Observer, October 18, 1893.

open the fair by leading a procession to the fair grounds. Though attempts were made to expand it, the parade was never an outstanding feature before the war. After the war, however, it was made into an elaborate affair and became one of the fair's major attractions. This was especially so during the seventies and eighties, when the parade became a trades procession with the major industries that exhibited their products at the fair entering huge floats. In 1880 the W. J. Blackwell Tobacco Company entered a float that was comprised of Negroes engaged in tobacco manufacturing. Edwards and Broughton and Company entered a float with an operating printing press, E. F. Wyatt displayed leather goods made in Raleigh, and John Cayton entered a float depicting men cutting local granite. R. N. Mitchell's float displayed the "operation of making boilers."²⁴ A steam engine was displayed on a float entered by Allen and Cram of Raleigh. The parades probably reached their peak in 1892 when the fair was held in conjunction with the Raleigh Centennial Celebration. That year the parade was over two miles long and was composed of 200 marshals on horseback, some forty floats, state government officials, several bands, bicycle riders, and marching military units.²⁵ With all their spectacle, color, noise, and excitement the parades could hardly fail to be popular.

The bands, the military groups, the races, the annual speeches, and the parades all originated in the ante-bellum period and were spectator events. After the war, however, sports events and contests in which the fair goer participated became a significant feature of the fair's social activities. In 1871 a pigeon-shooting contest was held.²⁶ The event

²⁴News and Observer, October 21, 1880.

²⁵Ibid., October 19, 1892.

²⁶Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 23, 1871.

proved so popular that it became an annual feature at future fairs. In fact shooting became such a popular sport at the fair that targets other than pigeons had to be found, and soon glass ball and potato-shooting matches were added to the fair's program. In 1873 a foot race among some twenty Negroes was held at the fair and was a success.²⁷ The foot races were continued and expanded, though the later races were actual contests and not mere comical events as was the first race.

Other minor sports events and contests were also held at the fairs. Partly to attract young people to the fair, the management in 1881 introduced bicycle riding, archery practice, and a broad saire tournament.²⁸ These tournaments, in which young men dressed as knights tested their prowess, gained enormous popularity during the nineties. The tournament winner received the honor of crowning the Queen of Love and Beauty at the annual Coronation Ball, usually held toward the end of the fair week. Though most of the contests and sports events were of an athletic nature, spelling bees were held for those who were better equipped for forms of mental competition.²⁹

Spectator sports other than horse racing also proved to be popular with crowds. In 1871 some Cherokee Indians were brought to the fair to play their native game of hand ball. Their ability was appreciated, and they returned to several other fairs.³⁰ In 1873 the first of the

²⁷ Ibid., October 21, 1873.

²⁸ Rules and Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Twenty-First Annual Exposition of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, at Raleigh, N. C. (Raleigh: Uzzell and Wiley, Printers and Binders, 1881), pp. 8-9.

²⁹ News and Observer, October 12, 1881.

³⁰ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 23, 1871.

present day organized sports made its appearance at the fair when the baseball teams of Pittsboro and Goldsboro engaged in a contest.³¹ Baseball games were played at nearly every fair during the seventies, but began to decline in public appeal in the late eighties. In 1892 football was introduced to the fair when the students of the Agricultural and Mechanical College (North Carolina State) played an exhibition game.³²

The postwar fair quickly became a convention grounds for various organizations, thus greatly enhancing its social significance. As early as 1873 the Mexican War veterans held a meeting at the fair.³³ The Grangers also used the fair grounds for informal meetings.³⁴ By 1881 the Confederate veterans were holding their reunions at the fair.³⁵ They were to become a permanent feature of the fair's social program. In 1886 a convention of northern settlers was held at the fair, and over one thousand Northerners who had adopted North Carolina as their home state attended the meeting. They formed a Northern Settlers Association of North Carolina in that year, and, like the Confederate veterans, continued to hold their annual conventions at the fair.³⁶ In 1887 the situation was reversed as a reunion of Tar Heels living outside the state was held.³⁷ This group, however, did not return to the fair.

³¹ Ibid., September 20, 1873.

³² News and Observer, October 15, 1892.

³³ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 16, 1873.

³⁴ Goldsboro Messenger, October 22, 1877.

³⁵ News and Observer, October 14, 1881.

³⁶ Bulletin, VII (November, 1886), 8.

³⁷ News and Observer, October 16, 1887.

The Farmer's Alliance of North Carolina made ample use of the fair both politically and socially during the eighties and early nineties. Extremely large crowds of Alliance farmers patronized the fair. It was estimated that four-fifths of those in attendance at the 1889 fair were members of the Alliance and their families.³⁸ In that year the Alliance carried out a publicity stunt that has probably never been equaled in the history of the fair. Then engaged in a fight to the death with the jute trust, the Alliance was pleading with the farmers to buy fertilizer in cotton rather than jute bagging in order to force the jute trust to lower its prices. To call attention to their fight the Alliance arranged a wedding of one of their members at the fair. A. M. Bateman and Josephine Knowles, both of Washington County, were married on Tuesday, October 15, 1889, by the State Alliance chaplain. The entire wedding party was dressed in cotton bagging. The bride and groom were congratulated by Governor Daniel Fowle, who approved of both the wedding and the fight with the jute trust.³⁹

In the postwar period the fair began to sponsor special days on which certain groups were encouraged to attend. Among the special days was a holiday for the public school children, a development of the late seventies and in general practice after 1880.⁴⁰ On public school day the fair usually sponsored several events designed to appeal to children such as pig races, bag races, wheel barrow races, and greased pole climbing.⁴¹ Negro attendance, permitted even in the ante-bellum period, greatly increased after the war. In 1882 the Negro crowd at the fair was larger

³⁸ Ibid., October 17, 1889.

³⁹ Ibid., October 16, 1889.

⁴⁰ Ibid., October 26, 1880.

⁴¹ Ibid., October 14, 1889.

than that attending their own industrial fair which had been held the previous week.⁴² By 1891 the fair had established a colored day, though Negroes were allowed to attend the fair on any day. The fair of 1891, which was held in conjunction with the Southern Exposition, had an educational day and a University day, both being held during fair week, yet both more a part of the exposition than of the fair.⁴³ The idea of the special day was firmly established by 1890.

During 1888 the fair's use of the "special attraction" rapidly increased. These events were, without exception, of an unusual or spectacular nature and were designed to draw crowds. This type attraction did not become popular until the late eighties, and closely paralleled the development of the carnival. In 1888 the fair sponsored a balloon ascension attempt which failed, the balloon company leaving town without notice the night after the attempt.⁴⁴ But as balloons were a popular novelty at this time, the management of the fair was determined to present such a spectacle to the people of North Carolina. In 1890 the first balloon flight from the fair was made, and for added interest, the balloonist returned to earth by parachute.⁴⁵ Henceforth throughout the nineties, a fair was not a fair without a balloon ascension and a parachute jump. Less spectacular features including cyclist, lion trainers, and even the Gettysburg cyclorama were scheduled as special attractions at the fair, though occasionally the crowd was disappointed when an attraction failed to appear.⁴⁶

⁴²Ibid., October 22, 1882.

⁴³Ibid., October 17, 1891.

⁴⁴Ibid., October 19, 1888.

⁴⁵Ibid., October 16, 1890.

⁴⁶Ibid., October 24, 1894.

In 1896 the fair entered the political field in search of a special attraction by attempting to obtain William Jennings Bryan for a personal appearance.⁴⁷ The leaders of the Society, many of whom were state political leaders, and almost all of whom were Democrats, were eager to see Bryan come to the state. Though the most powerful political forces in the state aided the Society in its efforts, Bryan could not be induced to appear.

The awkward carnival-like midway which is today so much a part of the fair developed slowly, never really reaching very large proportions until the eighteen-nineties. It was entirely a postwar development, as only a few games of chance had been connected with the ante-bellum fairs. Probably the stricter moral attitude of the people of the state kept the midway from developing with rapidity during the seventies and eighties. The fact that the midway sprang to life during the nineties, and especially from 1895 on, might be considered evidence that a more liberal attitude toward entertainment was being adopted by North Carolinians.

Though the great surge of development came in the nineties, some aspects of the carnival were to be seen soon after the fair's re-establishment in 1869. In 1870 a freak show displaying, among other attractions, "a spotted Negro and learned pig" was at the fair.⁴⁸ In 1873 a widget twenty years old, sixteen inches high, and weighing thirty-three pounds was reportedly exhibited at the fair.⁴⁹ Small freak shows such as these played the fairs throughout the seventies, and by 1880 the fair was beginning to draw larger shows. In that year a Professor Peek had a side show

⁴⁷Julian S. Carr to Benjamin Cameron, August 4, 1896, in Cameron Papers.

⁴⁸Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 21, 1870.

⁴⁹Ibid., October 14, 1873.

at the fair which was of considerable size. In addition to such freaks as an albino, a bearded woman, and some dwarfs, Peck presented a Punch and Judy show.⁵⁰ The slow growth of the midway continued, and in 1886 the fair had more side shows than at any time in its history.⁵¹ In 1894 a photo gallery came to the fair and did a booming business.⁵² In 1894 Captain Gebhart brought his menagerie of three lions, some tigers, hyenas, wolves, and an elephant to the fair.⁵³ There were several other shows on the grounds in addition to that of Captain Gebhart.

The organized, professionally run carnival shows began to appear at the fair in the late nineties. By 1895 the fair had developed an almost modern midway. At this fair, beside the regular freak and side shows, there was a "fake" show designed exclusively for a male audience. In that year also the adventuresome young man could attend the "hoo-chee-koo-chee" show and see the girls. This show was shut down by the Society on Thursday of fair week, but through a "compromise" it was allowed to re-open. Thereafter the secretary of the Society, John Nichols, policed the show to see that the girls were adequately clad.⁵⁴

In 1897 the shows of Victor D. Leavitt were on the fair grounds, and they returned in 1898. Among the attractions of Leavitt's shows were the Crystal Maze, Buckley's Great Horse Show, Mont Moranzo's Trout of the Moors, the Starved Cubans (an interesting commentary on the political scene in

⁵⁰ News and Observer, October 21, 1880.

⁵¹ Ibid., October 27, 1886.

⁵² Ibid., October 30, 1892.

⁵³ Ibid., October 19, 1894.

⁵⁴ Ibid., October 26, 1895.

American at that time), Jim Key, billed as one of America's smartest horses,⁵⁵ and several other lesser attractions.

By 1900 the modern midway with its organized shows, freak shows, side shows, and games of chance had become a part of the state fair. Though there is little doubt that this development drew crowds to the fair, there is also little doubt that it also helped diminish the fair's value as an instructional institution. The coming of the midway was just another step in the fair's socialization.

As the fair developed socially, and especially with the development of the midway, more undesirable elements of human society began to frequent the fairs. The festive air that prevailed throughout the city of Raleigh as well as at the fair itself naturally encouraged rowdy conduct on the part of those who were so inclined. Also, the great amount of money which came to the fair in the pockets of the visitors was an irresistible temptation for those who were looking for easy money. Pickpockets began their trade at the fair in the ante-bellum days and continued to practice at the fair during the rest of the century. Counterfeiters also troubled the fair's officials, but much less frequently.⁵⁶

Although drinking and gambling had been encountered at the ante-bellum fairs, both of these problems became worse as the fairs became larger. It was one of the major tasks of the fair marshals and the extra police to discourage both of these evils, though gambling usually caused the most trouble.

As early as 1856 the Society issued a statement through the Arator explaining that the managers of the fair had forbidden gambling on the

⁵⁵Ibid., October 26, 1896.

⁵⁶Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 16, 1873.

fair grounds, and that all violations of this rule had been committed without the management's knowledge.⁵⁷ During the postwar years gambling at the fair continued despite the efforts of the fair's management to prevent it. In 1874 the executive committee relaxed its efforts to curb gambling and licensed several types including roulette and other wheel games. The papers of the day roundly condemned this policy, saying that it allowed even minors to play the wheels.⁵⁸

By 1879 the Society had returned to its old policy of prohibiting gambling, though it was reported that gamblers had offered the Society thousands of dollars to allow them to operate at the fairs.⁵⁹ This policy of prohibition was changed to one of regulation in 1885 when the Society was allowing "games of chance," but no "skin games."⁶⁰ Gambling that could not be classed as games of chance continued to be barred by the Society throughout the eighties. In 1891 the state tried to deal with the problem by passing a law which stated that "all games of chance, wheels of fortune, and gambling of all species at any fair are hereby forbidden." Furthermore, if the officers of a fair knew that gambling was being done on the grounds and did not try to stop it, or if gambling was licensed by the fair, then the officials of that fair could be forced to repay money lost by a fair visitor to a gambler and to also pay an equal amount to the school fund.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Astorian, II (December, 1856), 649.

⁵⁸ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 19, 1874.

⁵⁹ Farmer and Mechanic (Raleigh), October 19, 1874.

⁶⁰ News and Courier, October 15, 1885.

⁶¹ Law of North Carolina (1891), p. 176.

The gamblers did not give up easily, however, and in 1892 the secretary of the Society was forced to shut down several games that were "fixed,"⁶² As late as 1899 the gamblers were still trying to operate at the fairs, and several games operators on the midway were arrested. Others decided to leave peacefully as a result of this action.⁶³

Human nature being what it is, alcoholic beverages caused the fair's management a considerable amount of trouble. Though sale of liquor on the fair grounds was forbidden, the problem had been present in the ante-bellum period, but on a small scale. When the fair was re-established, however, the problem grew as the crowds grew. The Society again took a very clear stand on the issue by prohibiting the sale or possession of alcoholic beverages on the fair grounds. As a result of this strict policy, the problem was transferred to the city of Raleigh, for most of the drinking was done at night and did not directly concern the fair. In 1874 the Raleigh "Saloons were three deep at night with frantic calls for the beverage and for a wonder there was but little drunkenness."⁶⁴

With so many people drinking, the fair could hardly avoid some trouble with those who could not limit their thirst. In 1881 the press complained that there was too much drinking being done outside the fair's gates, and requested that better order be kept on the grounds.⁶⁵ The bartenders and saloon keepers of Raleigh naturally took advantage of the huge crowds in Raleigh during fair week and began to remain open twenty-four hours a day for the duration of the fair. This practice brought down upon their heads

⁶² News and Observer, October 22, 1892.

⁶³ Ibid., October 19, 1899.

⁶⁴ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 15, 1874.

⁶⁵ News and Observer, October 15, 1881.

the wrath of the minister of Raleigh's First Baptist Church, who feared that the drunks would cause trouble on the fair grounds.⁶⁶ His fears proved somewhat exaggerated, for with the exception of some minor disturbances, the fair itself had surprisingly little trouble with those under the influence of alcohol. No serious disturbance at the fair seems to have stemmed from this cause.

Soon after its establishment the fair began to engulf the total social life of Raleigh, and this process was to continue as the fair grew larger, especially after 1873. Because of the slowness of travel in the earlier days of the fair, many of the visitors obtained accommodations in Raleigh and remained throughout the entire fair. In 1853 Raleigh was completely swamped by fairgoers, who made up the largest crowds seen in Raleigh "since the great Whig Convention of 1840."⁶⁷

With such crowds in the city, Raleigh naturally took on a festive air. Social leaders of North Carolina flocked to the city in such numbers that the list of distinguished visitors to the fair for any given year was impressive. Among the more prominent figures of the 1860's, for example, were Kenneth Rayner, Bedford Brown, Kemp P. Battle, Daniel M. Barringer, Edward Ruffin, and Thomas Ruffin.⁶⁸ The politicians took full advantage of such a large prospective audience and, especially in the ante-bellum period, spoke at the court house each night of the fair, thus drawing the people from the Agricultural Society's meetings.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Ibid., October 12, 1877.

⁶⁷Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 19, 1853.

⁶⁸Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 24, 1869.

⁶⁹North Carolina Planter, III (November, 1860), p. 35.

Also trying to attract the crowds after the fair's re-establishment were the theaters of the city, thus adding greatly to the social significance of the fair week. As early as 1870 the fair visitors were being entertained in the theaters in the evenings after the fair closed with such classics as "Othello."⁷⁰ In 1873 both Tucker and Metropolitan Halls were presenting shows.⁷¹ In 1880 the famous Ford Company was in the city during fair week, and throughout the century other well known groups of the day played at Raleigh each year during the week of the fair.⁷² As the theaters were open at night, they did not hinder the fair-goer from participating in full in the activities of the fair, but like the politicians, they did lure him from the meetings of the Society. However, this evil was probably more than compensated for by the fact that this was the only chance for many of the visitors to see such an event. Such an introduction of things cultural to the people of North Carolina perhaps did as much good for the state as would have the information gained at an agricultural meeting.

The custom of holding parties and balls during the week of the fair was to make social life in Raleigh during that week a continual gala. The custom had been established by the fair itself, which began holding an annual marshal's ball in the ante-bellum period. Early in the seventies the clubs and organizations of Raleigh adopted the practice of holding their parties during fair week. In 1874 the Oak City Pleasure Club held its annual "grand hop" during the fair and as a result of its success, staged another "hop" during the 1875 fair.⁷³ The practice was quickly adopted by

⁷⁰ Peter Evans Smith to his wife, October 24, 1870, in Peter Evans Smith Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. Hereinafter cited as the Smith Papers.

⁷¹ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 14, 1873.

⁷² News and Observer, October 18, 1880.

⁷³ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 14, 1875.

other Raleigh clubs. In 1876 the Monogram Club of Raleigh held a german during fair week, and the marshal's ball and the Pleasure Club's "hop" were held as usual.⁷⁴ In 1881 the Society added the Grand Coronation Ball to the already too large list of parties.⁷⁵ This development continued through the eighties and reached its peak in 1892. In that year the City of Raleigh had a Centennial Celebration in conjunction with the fair. Among the balls and parties held during the week were the Capital Club's german, the L'Allegro Club's german, the Grand Centennial Ball, and the Grand Coronation Ball.⁷⁶ These balls received extensive coverage by the press, with the costumes of the guests described in detail. They served as the crowning events of an extremely significant week. Though most of these parties were not directly connected with the fair, they greatly contributed to the overall significance of the fair week.

But events alone do not make a fair successful, socially or otherwise; people do. And the people themselves must be considered the fair's major social attraction. The fair was the biggest social occasion of the year for many of its visitors. What it meant to the crowds, what they felt, and how they acted at the fairs can best be seen in contemporary accounts of that event.

Peter Evans Smith gives a vivid account of the effects of foul weather on the fair crowds in a letter to his wife: "Over half the crowd got wet; and such a sight you never saw with umbrellas turned wrong side out--also a good many dresses in the same predicament."⁷⁷ In 1877 an editorial in

⁷⁴Ibid., October 18, 1876.

⁷⁵Rules and Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Twenty-First Annual Exposition of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, at Raleigh, N. C. (Raleigh: Ussell and Wiley, Printers and Binders, 1881), pp. 8-9.

⁷⁶News and Observer, October 15, 1892.

⁷⁷Peter Evans Smith to his wife, October 24, 1870, in Smith Papers.

a Raleigh paper described Raleigh at fair week thusly:

Raleigh abounds in animation just now. Driving, sailing, and promenading are in full play. The streets are an inspiring picture of life and activity. The hotels are already thronged with humanity and there is room for no more⁷⁶

Another account describes, in a rather colorful style, the city during the 1882 fair:

The city has had a 'regular jamboree' for ten days past. The crowds and dust, ankle deep; the crowds and mud, knee deep; the crowded hotels, and the crowds that couldn't find an hotel; the crowds in search of water to drink; the crowds that drank liquor like water; the crowds of pretty girls; the crowds of handsome marshals; etc, etc, etc, etc, etc, etc,--quantum stuff, enough!⁷⁹

The social aspects of the fair served as a mirror of the social life of the state. The North Carolinian's great love for things military can easily be seen in the popularity of military groups at the fair. In the Bourton era the lost cause philosophy is noticed in such events as the reviewing of troops by Zebulon Vance and Wade Hampton. The North Carolinian's love for the romantic can be found in the pomp, color, and spectacle of the tournaments and grand coronation balls. The social development of the fair certainly reflects the moral standards of the people of the state at any given time during the century. This fact is easily seen when the side shows of 1895 are compared with those of 1860, 1875, or even 1885.

The social development of the fair unquestionably caused a decline in the fair's value as an instructional institution. This fact was recognized as early as 1860. In that year the North Carolina Planter charged that many were attending the fairs to enjoy the social events instead of

⁷⁶ Goldshore Messenger, October 18, 1877.

⁷⁹ Farmer and Mechanic (Raleigh), October 25, 1882.

to seek information concerning agricultural and industrial advancements.⁸⁰
 The decline of the fair's instructional value in the postwar years was nearly proportional to the development of its social aspects.

The spreading of the festivities in the postwar period to include the social life of Raleigh further reduced the fair's instructional value. The social events in the city hurt the Society by drawing the crowds from its evening meetings, which were among the most instructive of the events held by the Society. Turning the annual address into a social affair by allowing the governor to present it was a mistake on the part of the Society, for some who attended the city's social events instead of the Society's nightly meetings might have come to the address.

The development of the midway probably did more to diminish the fair's instructional value than any other one thing, for it allowed the visitor to spend both night and day in the pursuit of pleasure. Its development also undoubtedly caused the visitor such financial expense that he would not have suffered at a purely educational fair.

But the good in the fair's social development far outweighs the bad. The fair provided a week of excitement and entertainment for the people of North Carolina, and especially for those who lived in the rural areas. For a rural citizen of the state to be a part of a festive crowd of from four to ten thousand was a treat seldom enjoyed. In short, the fair provided a much needed change from the everyday life on the farm, and was one of the few major events in the lives of many farmers.

Hundreds of fair visitors took advantage of the cultural opportunities offered by the theaters of Raleigh during the week who might not have otherwise darkened the doors of a theater. Also, the fair helped bind

⁸⁰ North Carolina Planter, III (November, 1860), 35.

together the people from different sections of the state, especially those from the east and the west, by gathering them together for a festive occasion.

Most important of all, the fair probably could not have survived had it not been for its social development. Had it continued to be entirely an instructional institution, especially after the Department of Agriculture, the Experiment Station, the A and M College, and better agricultural periodicals were established, it would have soon been antiquated. Even the fair's re-establishment after the Civil War was caused in part by its social appeal.⁶¹ And it must be remembered that at all times during the nineteenth century, even after the eighteen-nineties, the fair continued to play an important role in the promotion of agriculture and industry in the state, despite its ever increasing social role. The instructional methods which had been made ineffective by the growing social events were replaced at the later fairs by methods that were not so easily effected. Thus many of the detrimental aspects of the fair's social events were eliminated though the pleasure they provided was left unimpaired.

⁶¹R. A. Hamilton to Thomas Ruffin, February 8, 1869, in J. G. deSouillac Hamilton (ed.), The Papers of Thomas Ruffin (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1920), IV, 219-220.

CHAPTER V

INDUSTRIAL PROMOTION AT THE FAIR

By the terms of the charter granted to the North Carolina Agricultural Society by the state legislature the Society was to hold an annual state fair in order to promote both agriculture and "every species of native industry" within the state.¹ The fair, however, concentrated on its task of agricultural promotion and paid little attention to its obligation to industry, especially to the state's fledgling manufacturing industries. It could easily do so, especially in its earlier years, because of the simple fact that there was little industry in the state to promote. The efforts to promote industry that were made during the century were usually feeble and largely ignored by the industries of the state.

Beginning in the ante-bellum period the fair made some effort to obtain industrial exhibits and met with some minor success. These early industrial exhibits reflected the relative insignificance of industry in the South prior to the Civil War. Nearly everything shown was made by hand by local craftsmen, be it mattresses, boots, or buggies. Nothing was exhibited in large numbers because nothing was made in large numbers. Among such exhibits were boots and brogans, several individuals usually exhibiting four or five pairs.² Other leather goods displayed included saddles, bridles,

¹ North Carolina Historical Commission, A Manual of North Carolina (Raleigh: E. M. Ussell and Company, State Printers, 1913), p. 178.

² Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 27, 1860.

and harnesses.³ At most of the early fairs several cabinet making shops displayed their work. Though many of them were Raleigh concerns, shops from as far as Salem entered exhibits.⁴ Coach and buggy makers from towns throughout the state usually took their work to the fair for exhibits. Their displays were well received by the public and highly praised by the press.⁵ Other handicraft products including mattresses of shucks, cotton, and curled hair were displayed at the fair.

Exhibits of native machine made goods were limited to textiles. The largest native textile exhibit made during the ante-bellum period was made at the first fair. Seven cotton mills from various towns within the state displayed their products.⁶ Several of the firms did not continue to exhibit after their initial effort, but one or two textile firms usually sent exhibits to each of the ante-bellum fairs.

Most exhibits of machine made goods were made by Northern firms. Though textile and leather products were exhibited by these firms, the largest of such exhibits were made by manufacturers of organs and pianos. Musical instrument dealers of Raleigh and other towns usually made these displays, but at times they were made by representatives of the manufacturer.⁷ The dominance of the exhibits of machine made goods by Northern firms was noted and much resented by some of the more enlightened visitors

³ North Carolina Planter, I (November, 1858), 348.

⁴ Ibid., I, (November, 1858), 347-48.

⁵ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 17, 1855.

⁶ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 15, 1853.

⁷ North Carolina Planter, I (November, 1858), 347-48.

to the fairs. In this respect, the very lack of industrial exhibits at the fair stimulated North Carolinians to take a greater interest in industrial development for it made them realize that they were almost completely dependent upon the North for manufactured goods.⁸

When the fair was re-established in 1869 after an eight year interruption caused by the Civil War, little change could be noted in the type and number of industrial exhibits that were displayed. Throughout the early seventies the fair continued to be almost exclusively an agricultural exposition. Few industrial exhibits were obtained, and those that were were the same crude, handmade goods of the ante-bellum fairs. But within a few years, the fair, its leaders dreaming of the New South, began to pay more attention to industrial development. Signs of the beginnings of industrial growth in North Carolina were to be seen reflected at the fair by 1873. Some of the companies in several of the state's newly developing industries saw in the fair a possible means of advertising and began to use it as such.

The tobacco manufacturing industry was the major industrial exhibitor throughout the nineteenth century. During the ante-bellum period several small tobacco factories had exhibited their products, mostly plug tobacco, but including cigars and smoking tobacco, at the fairs.⁹ The Civil War introduced Northerners to North Carolina tobacco and created an ever increasing demand for the tobacco products of the state. This increased demand resulted in the rapid development of several tobacco companies. In the early

⁸ Weekly Raleigh Register, October 27, 1860.

⁹ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, November 1, 1854.

eighteen-seventies several of these companies began to use the fair as a means of advertising their products. Among them were the Robert F. Morris Manufacturing Company, the firm of B. J. Paschall, and the William T. Blackwell Company, all of Durham. Grundier and Zegler represented Raleigh, and Hillsboro was represented by the Webb and Roulhac Company and the firm of John Y. Whitted. The vast majority of the state's tobacco companies, however, did not exhibit. By 1880 there were one hundred and twenty-six tobacco factories in the state, yet only four or five exhibited their products at the fair.

The larger tobacco companies that developed in the state during the late eighties and nineties did much to hinder the fair's effectiveness in this field. By the middle eighties many of the smaller firms had been forced out of business by them. Thus the fair lost its principal exhibitors from the tobacco industry, the small factories which produced for the local market and used the fair as a means of advertising their products to this market. The firm of Joseph E. Progue and the Blackwell firm, for years two of the state's largest firms, completely monopolized the tobacco exhibits at the fair.¹⁰ The Blackwell firm continued to be the major exhibitor of tobacco products until 1898 when it was sold to the Union Tobacco Company, largely because of inability to meet the competition of the gigantic American Tobacco Company.¹¹ The fact that one of the owners of the Blackwell firm, Julian S. Carr, was a leader of the Society and its president from 1893 might explain that firm's continued exhibits.

The real giants in the industry, because of their huge size and national organisation, overlooked the fair as a means of promoting their products.

¹⁰ News and Observer, October 20, 1880.

¹¹ William Kenneth Boyd, The Story of Durham (Durham: Duke University Press, 1927), p. 94.

The largest of these firms, the American Tobacco Company, organized in 1890, completely ignored the fair as a means of presenting its products to the public. The firm was famous for its national advertising, yet it failed to take advantage of this excellent opportunity offered in its home state. Their co-operation would have greatly aided the fair in its efforts to promote the state's tobacco industry.

The story was much the same for the textile manufacturing industry. In 1840 there were twenty-five cotton mills in the state, and in 1860 there were thirty-nine.¹² Yet only seven of the state's mills exhibited at the 1853 fair. The products exhibited were limited to different types of yarns, usually of inferior quality.

During the eighties the fair, under the leadership of Thomas M. Holt, himself a cotton textile manufacturer, made an effort to attract more industrial exhibits. The cotton textile industry responded slightly to this effort, and several firms other than Holt's Alamance Mills exhibited during the eighties. The goods displayed were superior to the ante-bellum exhibits. Types of cloth as well as yarns, carpet warp, twines, and sheeting were exhibited.¹³

Cotton textile exhibits remained small during the nineties. Though in 1890 there were nearly a hundred cotton mills in the state, only a few exhibited at the fair in any given year.¹⁴ Again, however, quality improved

¹² Holland Thompson, From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), p. 50. Hereinafter cited as Thompson, From the Cotton Field.

¹³ News and Observer, October 18, 1882.

¹⁴ Thompson, From the Cotton Field, p. 66.

as colored cloth and plaids began to be exhibited,¹⁵ Finished garments
such as socks and underwear were also displayed.¹⁶

Though cotton textile goods dominated textile exhibits, the woolen mills, which were much less numerous, seemed to have exhibited at the fair proportionately more than did the cotton mills. As many as thirty-four patterns and several types of woolen cloth were exhibited in the eighties.¹⁷ In the nineties, finished products such as blankets and underwear were exhibited.¹⁸ The major exhibitors of woolen products included the Bethania Woolen Mills, the Mt. Airy Woolen Mills, and the woolen mills of the Fries brothers of Salem.

The depression which began in 1893 resulted in a reduction of textile as well as other industrial exhibits. In 1896 the fair attempted to regain some of these lost exhibitors and to acquire new ones if possible. Bennahan Cameron, then president of the Society, requested H. S. Chadwick, president of the Charlotte Machine Company, to use his influence with the various textile companies of the state to obtain exhibits for the fair. Chadwick warned Cameron that this would be difficult because of the depression, and his warning proved sound.¹⁹ Within one month of the fair, Cameron was assured of an exhibit from only one textile firm.²⁰

¹⁵ News and Observer, October 20, 1893.

¹⁶ Ibid., October 25, 1894.

¹⁷ Ibid., October 18, 1882.

¹⁸ Ibid., October 16, 1890.

¹⁹ H. S. Chadwick to Bennahan Cameron, September 4, 1896, in Bennahan Cameron Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. Hereinafter cited as Cameron Papers.

²⁰ John Nichols to Cameron, September 4, 1896, in ibid.

The failure of Cameron's efforts was to be expected. Never at any time, not even in prosperous years, had large numbers of the state's textile firms co-operated with the fair in the promotion of textile products. Several of the firms that did exhibit were owned entirely or in part by leaders of the Society. The textile industry, like the tobacco industry, had chosen to disregard the fair as a means of promoting their products, and for much the same reasons.

The third major North Carolina industry which exhibited its products at the nineteenth century fair was the furniture manufacturing industry. Furniture exhibits began at the ante-bellum fairs with the exhibits of handmade articles usually entered by local cabinet shops.²¹ Exhibits of this type continued to be seen at the fair several years after its re-establishment. Though the quality of the furniture exhibited improved over the years, it continued to be made by local artisans and cabinet shops. Only in the early nineties did the larger firms begin to exhibit their products.²²

The rapid growth and modernization of the industry during the decade from 1890 to 1900 were reflected by the fair as machine made, factory produced furniture replaced the exhibits of handmade furniture. In 1892 Ruffin Jones of Raleigh displayed what the press called the first furniture made by machine to be exhibited in the state. The furniture was made of native oak and walnut and was said to be equal to any of northern manufacture.²³

²¹ North Carolina Planter, I (November, 1858), 348-49.

²² News and Observer, October 16, 1890.

²³ Ibid., October 22, 1892.

Several other firms exhibited in the following years.²⁴ In 1899 the growth of the industry was further illustrated by the High Point furniture exhibit, the largest exhibit to be held by one industry up to that time. Eight furniture factories from that city entered exhibits. Among the items displayed were sideboards, chiffoniers, chamber sets, tables, hall racks, upholstered goods of several types, show cases, trunks, chairs of several grades and types, office furniture, beds, and dressers.²⁵

The furniture industry exhibited its products at the fairs more than did the older tobacco and textile industries. This fact can be attributed partly to the later development of the industry. It began its development in the early eighties, just when the fair was trying to attract industrial exhibits. Also, though rapidly expanding, the industry produced for a more local market than did the other two industries, and thus had more to gain by advertising at the fairs. The fair, however, had little to do with the growth of the industry; it merely reflected it. But it did fulfill its task of awakening the interest of the people of the state in the industry. The exhibits allowed the people to realize the rapid progress made by the North Carolina furniture industry and enabled them to take pride in its development. Though the majority of the furniture firms did not exhibit at the fairs, the 1899 exhibit gave some hope that exhibits from the industry would improve in the next century.

The fertilizer manufacturing industry was also sparingly represented by both native and out-of-state firms at the postwar fairs. The Navassa Guano

²⁴ Goldsboro Furniture Company, 1890; Alberta Chair Company of Ramseur, 1894; White-Pickel Company of Mebane, 1896; and the Home Furniture Company of High Point, 1897.

²⁵ Furniture World, X (November 2, 1899), 8.

Company of Wilmington entered an exhibit at the fair in 1870, as did a fish guano firm from Norfolk.²⁶ The Navassa firm exhibited periodically at the fair for the rest of the century and gave premiums for the best crops grown with its products, a practice soon adopted by several other fertilizer firms and dealers.²⁷ In this respect, the fertilizer industry was the most active industry in co-operating with the fair in its agricultural promotion program.

The fertilizer exhibits also helped awaken North Carolina to the possibilities of commercially catching fish to be used in the manufacture of fertilizer. In 1881 the Upshur Guano Company entered an exhibit which contained jars of material from which fertilizer was made. Among these materials was a specimen of fish scrap from Beaufort which the company agent described as the best purchased by his company that year. A prophetic reporter wrote that the fish scrap business "promises to be a great industry in the future of North Carolina."²⁸ Among the other firms exhibiting during the eighties and nineties, several of which offered large premiums, were the Durham Fertilizer Company, the Canton Chemical Company, the Raleigh Oil Mill and Fertilizer Company, the Caraleigh Phosphate mills, and the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company.

Like the state's other major industries, the fertilizer industry was represented at the fairs by a small minority of its members. Many of the native firms that entered exhibits were outshown by out-of-state firms. Both native and out-of-state exhibitors were more active in the fair's

²⁶ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 22, 1870.

²⁷ Twelfth Annual Fair of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, to Be Held in the City of Raleigh, October 15, 16, 17 and 18, 1872 (Raleigh: Nichols and Gorman, Book and Job Printers, 1872), p. 6.

²⁸ News and Observer, October 13, 1881.

agricultural promotion program than were those of other industries, however, for by promoting scientific agriculture by co-operating with the fair they encouraged the use of their products.

As in the tobacco and textile industries, there was a personal link between the fair and one of the exhibiting native firms. William Upchurch, a leader in the Society and at one time its president, was also president of the Raleigh Oil Mill and Fertilizer Company, one of the fair's largest exhibitors.²⁹

Despite the lack of co-operation from most of the state's fertilizer firms, the fair did help promote the industry in at least three ways. The fair enthusiastically encouraged the farmer of the state to use fertilizer on his crops, thus helping to increase the industry's market. It enabled the fertilizer firms of the state to advertise their products to thousands of farmers in a direct, more personal manner. And finally, the fair helped to make the farmer realize that the industry was being developed within his own, as well as other states.

The smaller industries of the state were also represented at the post-war fairs. Carriage and buggy manufacturers from several towns were usually well represented. The Tyson and Jones firm of Carthage, the Piedmont Wagon Company of Hickory, and the Hackney Brothers of Wilson were among the largest exhibitors of carriages. Leather goods from various towns were exhibited, but the work of Elias F. Wyatt and Son dominated the competition in this field from the eighties until the close of the century. The food processing industry was represented at the fairs during the eighties, the largest

²⁹ Premium List of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Fair of the N. C. State Agricultural Society At Raleigh, October 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th, 1885 (Raleigh: Edwards, Broughton, and Company, Printers and Binders, 1885), p. 16.

exhibits coming from Forsyth County.³⁰ From the eighteen-eighties until the end of the century the printing industry was usually represented by Edwards, Broughton and Company. Other industries represented at the fair at some time during the postwar period included quarrying, saw milling, pottery making, shoe manufacturing, tile and brick manufacturing, and the manufacturing of grain and fertilizer bags. Wood products such as caskets, coffins, baskets, and building materials were also exhibited.³¹ One of the most unusual native products exhibited at the fair was the pine straw carpets made by the Acme Manufacturing Company of Wilmington.³²

After the mid-seventies the fair became a commercial center. Merchants of Raleigh and other towns displayed their merchandise, especially those who held dealerships for products manufactured outside the state such as stoves, shoes, hardware items, guns, dry goods, sewing machines, and other articles. Dealers of musical instruments, especially organs and pianos, also exhibited their goods at the fairs.³³ The Fleischman Company of New York had agents exhibit their yeast at the 1887 fair.³⁴ The Kingam Company of Richmond displayed their hams, meats, and lard in 1888.³⁵ Indeed, it was a recognized fact during this period that the fair provided a major service for its visitors and the merchants by allowing the latter to display and advertise their goods.³⁶

³⁰ News and Observer, October 18, 1882.

³¹ Furniture World, X (November 2, 1899), 8.

³² News and Observer, October 20, 1887.

³³ Ibid., October 12, 1881.

³⁴ Ibid., October 19, 1887.

³⁵ Ibid., October 17, 1888.

³⁶ Farmer and Mechanic (Raleigh), October 25, 1882.

As the fair's leaders were more interested in agricultural than industrial promotion, the fair's industrial promotion program was largely determined by outside forces. In the ante-bellum period industrial exhibits were meager because there was little industry in the state. The election in 1873 of Thomas M. Holt, himself a manufacturer, as president of the Society reflected the idea of the new industrial South which had captivated the minds of many Southerners. Under his guidance the fair continued to place more emphasis on industrial promotion into the eighties. The depression of the early nineties curtailed the fair's efforts to promote industry and led to Benjamin Cameron's attempt in 1896 to attract industrial exhibits from the factories of both North Carolina and other states. As better times returned to the country, the fair's industrial exhibits increased. By 1899 it showed signs of becoming a significant industrial exhibition.

It can easily be said that industry promoted the fair as much as the fair promoted industry, for the most important leaders of the fair after Battle were industrialists. Thomas M. Holt, owner of the Alamance Cotton Mills, personally guided the fair to the peak of its popularity during the eighties. Julian S. Carr, who was engaged in several enterprises other than the Blackwell firm, served as president of the Society from 1893 to 1895. Joseph E. Progue was a leader in the organization and promotion of the fair throughout the eighties and nineties. Several less prominent industrialists and many who were in some manner connected with the state's industries were also active supporters of the Society and the fair.

Though the fair remained primarily an agricultural exhibition during the entire nineteenth century, its efforts to promote industry in the state

were notable. The task of promoting industry was assigned to the fair when industry, like agriculture, was an individual concern. The state's ante-bellum factories, especially in the textile and tobacco industries, were established largely by successful planters who recognized the advantage of finished products over raw crops. Their operations were usually personally directed by their establishers. Those times passed forever with the Civil War, and the fair's requirements to promote industry lost much of its original meaning. After the war the fair could never hope to encourage industrial as it could agricultural production by recommending the production of certain types of goods, the use of new methods of production, or the use of new machinery. It had no means with which to accomplish so huge a task. Premiums offered for crop production were attractive to the individual farmer; premiums offered for industrial production meant nothing to the industrialists. The fair could test farm machinery; it was impossible to test the heavy machinery required by industry. Farming was an individual, small scale enterprise requiring little capital, and the fair could instruct the farmer in the use of the best agricultural techniques and equipment. There was little the fair could do technically to promote large scale industry. It could and did encourage the improvement of small scale industry and handicrafts, however.

Though the majority of the firms in any one industry never participated in any of the fair's activities, a few firms from each developing industry in the state usually exhibited their products. When the tobacco industry began its growth, it was represented by several firms. The same was true for the textile, furniture, and fertilizer industries. Each was represented at the fair to some degree when it began to gain a place in the

state's economy. In this manner the fair enabled the people of the state, especially those of the east, to realize the importance of the state's budding industries. By promoting this realization of industrial development, it stimulated them to take pride in and encourage the growth of native industry, and thus served an important and intended function. The inability of the fair to present to the people a truly representative picture of the state's industrial growth was caused by the refusal of most of the state's industries to exhibit and was not the fault of the fair. Working as it did without the co-operation of most of the state's industries, the fair did as much as could be expected, especially after 1873, to fulfill its task of industrial promotion.

CHAPTER VI

AGRICULTURAL PROMOTION AT THE FAIR

The state fair was established by the North Carolina State Agricultural Society to serve as a medium through which that organization could best promote agriculture in North Carolina. Agricultural promotion remained the fair's major objective throughout the nineteenth century. Among the methods used with varying degrees of success to achieve this objective were essays, exhibits, premiums, speeches, and demonstrations. The fair concentrated on the promotion of no one phase of agriculture, but attempted to improve every aspect of the state's agricultural life. Improvements of livestock, field crops, vegetables, farm implements, and farming methods were all encouraged by the fair. By displaying the best of the state's agricultural products, the fair helped stimulate the farmer to become proud of and take an interest in North Carolina's agricultural development.

Among the major contributions of the fair to North Carolina's agricultural advancement was its promotion of better livestock. At the antebellum fairs, sometimes as much as one-half of the premiums awarded in a given year went to livestock exhibits.¹ During the postwar years, especially after 1875, the fair was active in introducing new breeds of cattle and swine to the state. It also encouraged the improvement of horses and poultry. Throughout the century it enabled thousands of farmers to see the advantages of improved livestock through its exhibits of the stock of leading farmers of North Carolina and other states.

¹Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, November 1, 1854.

Among the fair's most significant achievements were its efforts to encourage the production of improved cattle. As late as 1840 there were no purebred cattle in the state, with the possible exception of a few unregistered Shorthorns and Devons. In 1841 a Shorthorn bull became the first registered, purebred animal of any breed to be introduced to the state.²

North Carolina's lack of purebred cattle was reflected by the antebellum fairs. No pedigree was required to exhibit an animal in any class for such a requirement would have eliminated cattle exhibits at the fair. Furthermore, premiums were not offered for each breed, but for types of cattle, such as milch cows, mixed blood and native cattle, and working oxen.³ At times, several breeds would be placed in one class. For example Shorthorns, Durhams, and Herefords usually comprised one class, and Devons, Alderneys, Ayrshires, and Holsteins comprised another. Classes varied slightly from fair to fair.⁴ The fact that these breeds were specifically named in the fair's premium lists indicates that there were cattle in the state with enough of the traits of these breeds to be classified as such by the judges. None of the entries in these classes were registered animals, however.

Though no pedigrees were required of cattle exhibits at the early fairs, attempts were made to encourage the improvement of cattle in the state. To receive a premium an animal had to be judged worthy by the

² Robert S. Curtis, The History of Livestock in North Carolina (Raleigh: Agricultural Experiment Station, North Carolina State College, 1956), pp. 19-21. Hereinafter cited as Curtis, History of Livestock.

³ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 24, 1855.

⁴ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 5, 1853.

judges, even if it had no competition,⁵ Premiums offered for the best cattle exhibits were comparatively high, reaching twenty-five dollars for the best bull and ten for the best cow in all classes by 1860. In an effort to encourage the introduction of purebred stock to the state, a premium for imported cattle was offered. Pedigrees were required of animals entered in this class. This class was not particularly stressed, for premiums offered for imported cattle were no higher than those offered for native stock.⁶ To further encourage farmers to exhibit their cattle, feeding cost of all cattle exhibited was paid by the fair.⁷

There was little difference between the number or types of cattle exhibits at the ante-bellum and early postwar fairs. Beginning in 1873 premiums were offered for breeds rather than types of cattle. Breeds for which premiums were offered in that year were Devons, Durhams, Ayrshires, Alderneys, and Brahmas. Premiums were also offered for working oxen and cattle of any breed.⁸ In 1874 the fair created a Dutch Belted and Holstein class and combined the Alderneys and Jerseys to form another. Still, no pedigree was required of exhibits in any class, for at this time none of the breeds for which premiums were offered, with the possible exception of the Devons, was represented in the state by registered animals. The

⁵ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 8, 1853.

⁶ North Carolina State Agricultural Society. The Eighth Annual Fair, of the Society, Will Be Held at Raleigh, on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, October 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th, 1860. (no place, no publisher, n. d.), p. 4. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1860.

⁷ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 5, 1853.

⁸ Rules, Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Thirteenth Grand Annual Fair of the North Carolina Agricultural Society to Commence Monday, October 13th, 1873 (Raleigh: Stone and Ussell, Printers, 1873), pp. 11-12. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1873.

judges determined the class in which each animal would be exhibited. But by offering premiums for each of these breeds, the fair sought to encourage the farmer to obtain registered stock, or at least to improve his native stock by mixing them with blooded cattle.

In 1873 the fair also obtained exhibits of registered, purebred cattle from outside the state. A Dutch Belted bull from Delaware, Jerseys from Rhode Island and New York,⁹ and Devons from New Jersey were exhibited. These animals provided visual evidence to thousands of North Carolina farmers of the superiority of blooded cattle to the vast majority of their native stock. Unfortunately, the practice of obtaining exhibits of blooded cattle from other states seems to have been discontinued during the remainder of the seventies.

Within five years after the 1873 fair's display of blooded cattle,¹⁰ registered Jerseys were being bred in North Carolina. This indicates that registered Jerseys were brought into the state within four years after the 1873 exhibit, and perhaps even earlier. Several leaders of the Society introduced Jerseys to their farms after 1876. Among them were Rufus S. Tucker, William Grimes, L. Banks Holt, and William C. Upchurch. These men began to exhibit their Jersey herds at the fairs in the early eighties. After 1881 exhibits of Jerseys at the fair continually increased, and by 1885 a separate class for Jerseys had been created.

During the eighties the fair began to place increasing emphasis on registered cattle. By 1880 animals with pedigrees were receiving preference

⁹Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 18, 1873.

¹⁰Curtis, History of Livestock, p. 62.

over those without, all other things being equal.¹¹ In 1882 all bulls exhibited were required to have a pedigree except those in classes of natives and grades.¹² Finally, in 1885, the Society required that exhibits of both bulls and cows in all classes except natives and grades have a pedigree.¹³

Besides introducing new breeds of cattle from the stock farms of other states, the fair displayed to the average farmer the blooded stock introduced by the more progressive farmers of North Carolina. In 1885 Ayrshires and Guernseys were exhibited.¹⁴ Registered Guernseys had been introduced to the state in 1882, and Ayrshires in 1878.¹⁵ Holsteins first appeared in the state in 1884 and were being exhibited at the fair by 1886. Most of the exhibits were entered by leaders of the Society.¹⁶ After 1886 the Wake County Cattle Club, many of whose members were also leaders of the Society, entered excellent exhibits of blooded cattle. Herefords were shown in 1892,

¹¹Rules and Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Twentieth Annual Exposition of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, at Raleigh, N. C., October 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 1880 (Raleigh: Unsell and Wiley, Printers and Binders, 1880), p. 32. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1880.

¹²Rules and Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Twenty-Second Annual Exposition of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, At Raleigh (Edwards and Broughton and Company, Printers and Binders, 1882), p. 26. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1882.

¹³Premium List of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Fair of the N. C. State Agricultural Society at Raleigh, October 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th, 1885 (Raleigh: Edwards, Broughton and Company, Printers and Binders, 1885), p. 22. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1885.

¹⁴News and Observer, October 16, 1885.

¹⁵Curtis, History of Livestock, pp. 67-73.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 20; News and Observer, October 26, 1886.

a decade before there were any Hereford breeders in North Carolina.¹⁷
 During the late eighties and nineties large numbers of purebred cattle were displayed at the fairs by the larger stock farms of the state, such as the Biltmore Estates and Julian S. Carr's Oconeechee farm.

Though individuals were responsible for the introduction of new breeds of cattle to the state during the eighties, the fair began to introduce new breeds once more during the nineties. In 1894 a Brown Swiss bull from Pennsylvania was exhibited, the first of the breed to come to North Carolina.¹⁸ Black Angus cattle and a Holstein-Friesian bull which took first prize at the Chicago World's fair were also exhibited.¹⁹

The fair undoubtedly played a major role in development of the state's purebred cattle industry, especially after 1875. During the postwar period Jerseys, Dutch Belted, Herefords, and Brown Swiss cattle were exhibited by out-of-state livestock farms before they could be found in North Carolina. Herds of each of these breeds were to be found in North Carolina within ten years after they were displayed, with the exception of the Brown Swiss. It is likely that the fair's exhibits had much to do with this increase in the state's blooded cattle.

Breeds introduced by the state's progressive farmers such as Guernseys, Holsteins, and Ayrshires were exhibited at the fair within two to seven years after their introduction to the state. The fair was able to present such excellent exhibits because many of the state's most progressive cattlemen were leaders in the Society. At no other exhibition in the state was the farmer able to see fine cattle in such numbers. These exhibits

¹⁷ News and Observer, October 20, 1892; Curtis, History of Livestock, p. 77.

¹⁸ News and Observer, October 24, 1894.

¹⁹ Ibid., October 23, 1894.

enabled thousands of farmers to see the advantages of purebred animals and helped create within the farmer a desire to improve his native cattle.

The fair also greatly encouraged the improvement of swine in the state. Swine exhibits at the ante-bellum and early postwar fairs followed the pattern established for cattle exhibits. The animals were usually exhibited in the following three classes: small breeds, large breeds, and natives.²⁰ Swine that were part Suffolk, Berkshire, Chester, and other breeds were exhibited, but no purebreds were shown. No pedigree was required of animals in any class, but only animals judged worthy were awarded premiums. Premiums awarded for swine exhibits were usually below those offered for cattle.

Beginning in 1873, premiums were offered by breeds instead of class. Breeds for which premiums were offered were Essex, Berkshire, Chester, Whites, and Suffolks. A premium was also offered for the best hog of any breed.²¹ In 1874 the fair doubled the premiums offered for swine, evidently trying to encourage swine production in the state.²²

The fair also played a small role in introducing new breeds of swine to the state. In 1876, six years prior to the development of Berkshire herds in the state, a pedigree Berkshire from Pennsylvania which had been donated to the fair was exhibited.²³ The Jersey Red hog was introduced

²⁰ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 24, 1855.

²¹ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1873, pp. 14-15.

²² Rules, Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Fourteenth Annual Exposition of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, October 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17, 1874 (Raleigh: News Publishing Company, 1874), p. 9. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1874.

²³ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 21, 1876; Curtiss, History of Livestock, p. 94.

to the state at the 1883 fair.²⁴ This breed was soon adopted by North Carolina farmers. By 1897 nine premiums were offered for this breed alone.²⁵

During the eighties the more progressive farmers of the state began to introduce new breeds of swine. Most of these breeds were displayed at the fair within a few years after their introduction. Among those breeds added to the fair's premium list were Poland Chinas, Victorias, and Duroc-Jerseys. Though many of the swine exhibited during the eighties were registered, it was not until 1894 that the fair required pedigrees of its swine exhibits.²⁶

The fair's role in the introduction of blooded swine to the state was undoubtedly less important than its role in the introduction of purebred cattle. This difference in the two roles existed partly because not nearly so much effort was expended on the attempt to improve swine as was spent trying to improve cattle. Premiums offered for swine exhibits were usually from one-half to one-fourth of those offered for cattle exhibits. Requirements for swine exhibits were much less strict than those for cattle after 1882. Also, fewer breeds of purebred swine were introduced to the state by the fair.

Yet the fair certainly was a factor in the general improvement of swine in the state. The ante-bellum exhibits helped to stimulate interest in the improvement of swine among large numbers of farmers who could not be reached by farm journals and other media. By offering premiums for individual breeds

²⁴ News and Observer, October 20, 1893.

²⁵ North Carolina State Fair Premium List, 1897 (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton and Company, Printers and Binders, 1897), p. 24.

²⁶ North Carolina State Fair Premium List, 1894 (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton and Company, 1894), p. 39.

of swine in 1873, the fair attempted to encourage the farmer to replace the common range hog with purebred animals. Through the use of experiments, essays, and lectures, it attempted to encourage the farmer to take better care of his swine and abandon the old system of allowing swine to run at large and be forced to "root or die." It also introduced two breeds, the Berkshire and the Jersey Red, that became extremely popular with the state's farmer. Swine introduced to the state by progressive individual farmers, many of whom were Society leaders, were exhibited at the fairs. Thousands of farmers, who might otherwise never have seen these new breeds, quickly became acquainted with them.

Though the fair's efforts to improve cattle and swine were much more significant than those to improve horses and mules, the latter two animals comprised the branch of livestock upon which for years the fair's management placed the most emphasis. This emphasis was especially heavy during the ante-bellum period but began to decline in the early eighties as cattle exhibits received more attention. Exhibits of horses and mules were early divided into the classes of thoroughbreds, heavy draught horses, light draught and saddle horses, mules, and jacks and jennets.²⁷ The classifications were maintained, with some minor adjustments, for the remainder of the century.

More emphasis was placed upon the thoroughbred than upon the other classes of horses. A pedigree was required of exhibits in the thoroughbred class in 1855, nearly thirty years before pedigrees were required for any other animal.²⁸ Premiums in this class ranged from a few dollars above to

²⁷ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 5, 1853.

²⁸ Helen D. Wilkin, "The Promotion of Agriculture in North Carolina, 1810-1860" (unpublished master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1941), p. 126.

more than double those offered for other classes and branches of livestock. The parade of horses, which began in the ante-bellum period, was always led by the thoroughbreds.²⁹

Next to the thoroughbred, the racing horse was most favored. The fair offered a handsome purse to the winners of its annual horse races, thus encouraging the development of the racing horse, with emphasis upon trotters. To further encourage this development, usually one or two racing events were open only to North Carolina horses.³⁰ Unlike the thoroughbred,³¹ the racing horse was not required to have a pedigree until 1885.

It is unlikely that the fair had much effect on the improvement of thoroughbred and racing strains in the state. Both types were usually raised only by the wealthy farmer and used only for extremely light work and sports. The emphasis upon these types of horses was due to the fact that the wealthier farmers were the leaders of the Society. But such horses were of little use to the average farmer who needed draught animals, not status symbols. The fair made perhaps its biggest mistake in livestock promotion by placing so much emphasis upon these two types of horses.

Though draught horses, mules, and jacks and Jennets received less attention, they were not ignored. Premiums offered in these classes were much lower than those offered for thoroughbreds, and pedigrees were not required of draught horses until in 1885.³² The fair seems to have made

²⁹ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 20, 1858.

³⁰ Farmer and Mechanic (Raleigh), October 16, 1879.

³¹ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1885, p. 22.

³² Ibid.

hardly any effort to introduce new draught breeds to the state. However, plowing matches for both horses and mules allowed the farmer to see the comparative ability of draught animals already within the state.³³

Very few draught horses were used by the farmers after the war largely because of the growing popularity of the mule. Yet with the exception of awarding premiums for the best jacks and mules, the fair did little to encourage the improvement of mules. As the mule was so universally popular, it seems that the fair should have given more attention to the improvement of this animal and less to the improvement of horses, especially those types which were used primarily in the pursuit of pleasure.

The fair did little to encourage sheep production in the state besides offering premiums and displaying those sheep that were entered for exhibit. Premiums offered for sheep were usually the same as or a bit lower than those offered for swine. Until 1873, sheep were entered in different classes, usually imported sheep, natives and mixed blooded sheep, and fine wool or middle wool sheep.³⁴ After 1873 they were exhibited by breeds. Merinos, Southdowns, and natives were the original breeds for which premiums were offered.³⁵ Cotswolds, Oxfords, and Leicesters were added in latter years. No pedigrees were required of sheep until 1882, and then only of rams.³⁶ With very few exceptions, all sheep exhibited were raised in North Carolina. Those exhibited from other states were of the breeds that were

³³Weekly Raleigh Register, October 20, 1858.

³⁴Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 5, 1853.

³⁵N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1873, pp. 13-4.

³⁶N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1882, p. 26.

popular in North Carolina; thus, the fair did not introduce any new breeds to the state. The fair's relatively feeble efforts to promote the sheep industry in the state reflect the fact that swine and cattle dominated the livestock industry of North Carolina. It also indicates a general lack of interest of the Society's leaders in sheep raising caused in part by the disastrous results of the Merino sheep craze of the early eighteenth-hundreds.

The fair's contributions to the production of better poultry were largely limited to offering premiums, encouraging new methods of raising poultry, and displaying the better types of poultry that were raised by the state's more progressive farmers. Premiums can be said to have had little effect, for the top premium offered at the early fairs for poultry was only three dollars, and it never rose much above that.

The fair's encouragement of new methods of poultry raising was limited largely to the exhibits of incubators made by poultry farms from other states. These exhibits attracted the attention of North Carolina farmers, but only as a novelty. The incubators were evidently not adopted by North Carolina farmers, for though they were exhibited as early as 1880, they were still considered novelties when exhibited as late as 1895.³⁷

The fair, however, did a splendid job of displaying for the average farmer the better types of poultry raised in the state. Poultry exhibits at the ante-bellum and early postwar fairs were meager, but they began to improve tremendously during the eighties. Yet standards for judging poultry exhibits were not established until the nineties, when the American

³⁷News and Observer, October 20, 1880; ibid., October 26, 1895.

Standard of Perfection was adopted.³⁸ By the nineties large poultry farms from both North Carolina and other states were entering excellent poultry exhibits. At the 1896 fair premiums were offered for forty-six types of chickens, three types of turkeys, ten types of ducks, six types of geese, and ten types of pigeons.³⁹ The fair was the best medium through which the average farmer could become acquainted with the better types of poultry raised in this and other states. Thus the fair played an important role in the improvement of this branch of the state's agriculture.

The fair's efforts to improve the methods of field crop production in North Carolina comprised the second major part of its program of agricultural promotion. The fair sought primarily to introduce scientific agricultural methods to the masses of North Carolina's farmers. This was a formidable task, for at the time of the fair's establishment North Carolina was far behind most of her sister states in agricultural development. Only a few progressive individuals were practicing scientific farming methods, and many felt that such methods were silly and impracticable.

One of the most popular means by which the ante-bellum fair sought to familiarize the farmer with the advantages of scientific farming methods was the annual address. These addresses were usually made by the state's leading gentlemen farmers and other prominent North Carolinians. Among the speakers were Kenneth Rayner, Thomas Ruffin, Elias Mitchell and John L. Bridgers. The fair's attendance on the day of the address was usually the largest of the week. The speakers stressed the North Carolina farmer's need to use scientific agricultural methods to improve his pro-

³⁸North Carolina State Fair Premium List, 1896 (no place, no publisher, n. d.), p. 30. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1896.

³⁹North Carolina State Fair Premium List, 1896 (no place, no publisher, n. d.), pp. 28-32.

duction. The typical speaker encouraged ditching, manuring, the planting of cover crops, the use of marl and ashes, and the practice of crop rotation. Occasionally a speaker would describe the manner in which these new processes were to be used.⁴⁰ Other topics discussed included the need for agricultural education and the importance of agricultural chemistry.⁴¹

The address was significant as a means of acquainting farmers with scientific agricultural methods only in the ante-bellum period. Partially a social event from its beginning, the effectiveness of the address is somewhat suspect. During the early seventies the custom of allowing the governor to make the address was established, thus destroying what agricultural value it possessed. Henceforth, the address was a political and social event.

The meetings of the Society, though they attracted fewer people, were more effective in encouraging agricultural reforms than was the address. Begun at the first fair, the meetings were held each night during the fair week after the fair itself had been closed for the day. It was at these meetings that the Society attempted actually to instruct the farmer in the use of scientific agricultural methods, the results of which he had seen displayed during the day. Speeches at times accompanied by reports on experiments were the major means of instruction. In the ante-bellum period the speeches were usually made by leading farmers, but during the late seventies they began to be given by professional agriculturists, either college professors or employees of the State Department of Agriculture.

⁴⁰ Transaction of the North Carolina Agricultural Society for 1857 (Raleigh: Holden and Wilson "Standard Office," 1858), pp. 15-32.

⁴¹ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 19, 1853; Arator, II (December, 1856), 644-48.

Such topics as the importance of irrigation, the best mode of curing tobacco, the farmer's need for education, and chemistry in agriculture were discussed.⁴²

These meetings were most effective in the ante-bellum period despite the improvement of the quality of the speakers during the postwar years. This decline in effectiveness was caused by the increased social activity in Raleigh during the fair week which lured many from the meetings. The meetings appealed primarily to the more educated farmer and, therefore, failed to attract the small farmer in large numbers. But they did allow the more progressive farmers throughout the state to exchange ideas. And some average farmers, though probably never more than two or three hundred at each meeting, did receive instruction in scientific agricultural methods.

Premiums offered for the best essay on subjects concerning improved farming methods were another means by which the ante-bellum and immediate postwar fair sought to promote scientific agriculture. In 1853 premiums were offered for seven essay topics.⁴³ By 1860 the number of essay topics had been reduced to five. These five were improving worn-out land, drainage, crop rotation, manure preparation, and the use of the pea as a green manure.⁴⁴ The use of red clover as a green manure was made a topic in 1870.⁴⁵ The premiums offered varied from year to year and from topic to topic, but averaged about ten dollars. The essay topics were abandoned entirely by 1877.

⁴² Goldsbore Messenger, October 13, 1879.

⁴³ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 5, 1853.

⁴⁴ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1860, pp. 1-3.

⁴⁵ Tenth Annual Fair of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, to be Held in the City of Raleigh on the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st of October, 1870 (Raleigh: Nichols and Gorman, Job Printers, 1870), pp. 12-13. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1870.

Also used to encourage the farmer to adopt improved methods were premiums offered for certain types of agricultural experiments. Like the essay, the experiment was used only by the ante-bellum and immediate post-war fair and was discontinued by 1877. The premiums offered for the various experiments were almost the same as those offered for essays. In 1853 premiums were offered for fourteen different experiments, including the cost and effect of sub-soil plowing, the use of peaty soils as manure, the benefits of guano, and various methods of cultivating rye and tobacco.⁴⁶ By 1860 the experiments had been reduced to five in number. The number of experiments for which premiums were offered was increased in 1869 with the addition of premiums for experiments concerning the production of corn for fodder, the use of human excrement as a manure, the cost and effect of the use of bone dust and phosphate of lime, and the action of lime on lands above the fall line.⁴⁷ After these additions the experiments remained unchanged until they were discontinued.

The discontinuation of both the essays and the experiments indicates that they were not successful as a means of familiarising the farmer with agricultural reforms. The requirements which one had to fulfill in carrying out an experiment and the relatively modest premiums offered for its results did not make them a popular feature of the fair. Both were too formal and complicated to appeal to the average farmer. As a result, the effectiveness of both methods was limited to those farmers interested enough in the reform movement to participate in one of them.

⁴⁶ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 5, 1853.

⁴⁷ Ninth Annual Fair of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, to be held in the City of Raleigh on the 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd of October, 1869 (Raleigh: Nichols and Gorman, Job Printers, 1869), pp. 10-11. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1869.

The methods used to promote agricultural reforms by the ante-bellum and immediate postwar fair were all either discontinued or made comparatively ineffective by the increasing social aspects of the fair. As a result, new methods had to be found. The methods that were to prove most effective in the postwar era were less formal, designed more for a mass audience, and were not sponsored directly by the Society.

After the middle seventies the fair was aided greatly in its attempts to promote scientific agricultural methods by companies engaged in the manufacture of products used by the farmer. Several fertilizer manufacturers and dealers encouraged the use of their products by offering premiums for the best crops grown with them.⁴⁸ Some of these companies at times offered premiums for the best production of certain crops, regardless of the type fertilizer used in producing them.⁴⁹ Premiums offered by these firms were often higher than those offered by the fair itself. Though the companies' motives were certainly ulterior, their efforts were of value in encouraging the farmers to use guano and other types of fertilizer and commercial crop dressings.

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture played a significant role in the fair's promotion of scientific agriculture. Immediately after its creation in 1877, the department began to exhibit at the fair.⁵⁰ The exhibits of the department's Experiment Station during the eighties and

⁴⁸ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1874, pp. 54-55.

⁴⁹ Rules, Regulations and Schedule of Premiums for the Seventeenth Annual Exposition of the North Carolina Agricultural Society at Raleigh, N. C., October 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th, 1877 (Raleigh: John Nichols, Book and Job Printer, 1877), pp. 21-28. Hereinafter cited as N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1877.

⁵⁰ Leonidas L. Polk, Report of L. L. Polk, Commissioner of Agriculture for 1877-1878 (Raleigh: The Observer, State Printers and Binders, 1879), pp. 34-5.

nineties were particularly outstanding. Superior crops produced at the station with scientific farming methods were displayed to give the farmer visual evidence of the productiveness of these methods. Also, station employees attempted to instruct the farmer in the use of these methods. Their instructions were well received by the farmers, some of whom took notes on the methods that were explained.⁵¹ Held during the day, the exhibits did not have to compete with many social attractions. They were able to reach a large number of farmers because of their informality and the fact that the instructions given at them could be repeated to different groups several times a day.

The department also held farmer's institutes at the fair. The 1887 legislature had required the department to hold institutes in each county of the state as a means of promoting agricultural reform.⁵² The institutes were held at the fair during the late eighties and nineties in order to reach the large audience of farmers in attendance. At the institutes topics such as the silo and ensilage and fairs as a means of promoting agriculture were discussed. The topics discussed were sometimes illustrated by experiments and demonstrations.⁵³

North Carolina State College, then A and M College, also began to enter exhibits at the fair soon after the college's establishment in 1889.⁵⁴

Private agricultural organizations also aided the fair in its task of promoting scientific agricultural methods. The State Grange began offering

⁵¹ News and Observer, October 21, 1882.

⁵² Curtis, History of Livestock, p. 25.

⁵³ News and Observer, October 11, 1887.

⁵⁴ Ibid., October 19, 1893.

premiums for the best agricultural display made by one of its members in 1874 and continued to do so into the eighties.⁵⁵ During the eighties and nineties the Farmer's Alliance of several counties sought to encourage its members to adopt better farming practices by exhibiting the best products raised by Alliance farmers.⁵⁶ The Progressive Farmer, organ of the Alliance, suggested that the fair should set aside several of its exhibition halls for the use of the Alliance. By so doing, competition for premiums would develop between county Alliances, thus greatly stimulating agricultural improvement in the state.⁵⁷ This advice was not followed, however.

The fair made a mistake in not following this advice, for the Alliance members attended the fairs in large numbers, comprising as much as four-fifths of the fair's attendance on a given day in the peak years of the Alliance's strength. It is very likely that had the proposal been followed, the results anticipated by the Progressive Farmer would have been achieved. Certainly the fair should have given more attention to the possibilities of working with the Alliance to encourage agricultural reforms.

Both the Alliance and the Grange rendered their greatest services to the fair by encouraging their members to attend and support it. It was far more important for the fair to create in the state's farmers an interest in and a desire for agricultural reforms than to instruct them in the methods of scientific agriculture. The exhibits, speeches, experiments, and demonstrations seen and heard by farmers encouraged to attend the fair by either the Grange or the Alliance helped the fair to fulfill this task.

⁵⁵ H. G. State Fair Premium List, 1874, p. 5-6.

⁵⁶ News and Observer, October 19, 1889.

⁵⁷ Progressive Farmer, IV (October, 1899), 2.

Inasmuch as improved farming methods resulted in better per acre production, the fair made per acre production the basis upon which it offered premiums in order to encourage the adoption of such methods. This policy was begun at the first fair when premiums were offered for the best per acre production of some twenty-eight crops including cotton, tobacco, several small grains, and other crops.⁵⁸ This emphasis on per acre production continued throughout the ante-bellum period. By 1860 exhibits of field crops were required to be accompanied by affidavits stating the amount produced per acre. To further encourage increased production, per acre production requirements were set for each crop exhibited. For example, barley exhibits were required to have affidavits stating that they were from fields yielding at least fifty bushels per acre. The requirements for cotton were set at 1,400 pounds per acre for exhibits from tracts of twenty-five or more acres.⁵⁹

With the re-establishment of the fair in 1869, the quality as well as the quantity of crops produced began to receive some emphasis. In that year premiums were offered for the best exhibits of cotton, tobacco, and small grains, regardless of per acre production.⁶⁰ The next year premiums based on both quantitative and qualitative production were offered.⁶¹ During the remainder of the century premiums were offered sometimes for quantitative production, sometimes for qualitative production, and sometimes for both. But the major emphasis continued to be placed upon encouraging increased per acre production.

⁵⁸ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 5, 1853.

⁵⁹ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1860, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁰ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1862, p. 6.

⁶¹ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1870, pp. 7-11.

The Society also used its premiums to encourage the production of certain crops. The importance placed upon the production of a certain crop determined the amount of the premium offered for exhibits of that crop. During the early ante-bellum fairs preference was given to no one crop, and cotton, tobacco, small grains, and other field crop exhibits usually received a top premium of ten dollars. By the end of the ante-bellum period, however, the production of wheat, cotton, and tobacco was highly stressed. Premiums as high as fifty dollars were offered for each of these crops, while those offered other crops remained at the level of premiums offered at the earlier fairs.⁶²

After the war, premiums offered for tobacco remained higher than those offered for other crops, with the exception of cotton, though not as disproportionately higher as they had been in the late ante-bellum period. Fertilizer companies also aided the fair in encouraging increased tobacco production by offering premiums for the best per acre production of tobacco achieved with the use of their products.⁶³

Beginning in the early seventies the fair attempted to encourage the production of a light colored tobacco to be used as wrappers. By 1880 premiums offered for this tobacco were five times higher than those offered for the regular tobacco strains.⁶⁴ The high premiums evidently did not produce the desired results. The fact that they continued to be offered until the turn of the century indicates that few farmers began producing this type of tobacco.

⁶² N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1860, pp. 2-3.

⁶³ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1874, p. 55.

⁶⁴ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1880, pp. 23-25.

Cotton production continued to be stressed after the war. Fertilizer companies also offered premiums for cotton exhibits, usually placing heavy emphasis on production.⁶⁵ Premiums offered by the fair itself, however, often stressed quality rather than quantity.

The fair's efforts to encourage increased production of tobacco and cotton were to be expected. Somewhat surprising, however, is the amount of effort expended by the fair to encourage the production of small grains. In the ante-bellum period the Society's leaders' interest in small grain production was high. Wheat received the most emphasis, and by 1860 premiums⁶⁶ offered for this crop were equal to those offered tobacco and cotton. The production of rye as a food for livestock was also encouraged by the ante-bellum and immediate post-war fairs by awarding premiums for the best essay on this subject.⁶⁷

After the war, premiums offered for small grains were usually based on quality, not quantity. The fair exhibited various varieties of small grains grown by the state's leading farmers, including several types of wheat, buck wheat, rye, oats, and barley. It also displayed the newer⁶⁸ varieties of these grains, especially those that were rust-resistant.

The fair also encouraged the growing of grasses, clover, and other hay producing crops. Special premiums were offered for grass seeds best suited to produce good pastures in the South.⁶⁹ The growing of clover and foreign

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1860, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁷ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1870, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁸ News and Observer, October 20, 1882.

⁶⁹ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 24, 1860.

grass received special emphasis. By 1885 the premium given for the best per acre production of hay had risen to fifty dollars.⁷⁰ The fair also exhibited many varieties of clover and grass seeds.

This emphasis was placed upon small grain and hay producing crops for three reasons. First, many of the fair's ante-bellum leaders were looking for crops which could be used as green manure, or what could today be called a cover crop. They found that certain grasses, especially clovers, could be successfully used for this purpose, and they wished to encourage the state's farmers to adopt the practice of using these crops. Second, the fair was encouraging the improvement of the state's livestock. Improved stock needed improved feeds, and better varieties of grains, clover, and grasses could fulfill this need. Third, the fair was interested in developing a diversified agricultural economy in the state. This interest appeared in 1869 when a premium was offered for the best essay on the advantages of combined planting and farming.⁷¹ The fair continued to encourage diversified farming during the remainder of the postwar period. In 1880 it began offering a premium for the best display from one farm of ten types of grain, a bale of hay, and a bale of cotton.⁷²

The fair's efforts to encourage diversified farming were doomed to failure. It was encouraged by the Society's leaders and did not reflect the desires of the average farmer. And even had the average farmer wanted to engage in diversified farming, the crop-lien system that developed after the war would have prevented him from doing so.

⁷⁰ H. G. State Fair Premium List, 1885, p. 17.

⁷¹ H. G. State Fair Premium List, 1869, p. 11.

⁷² H. G. State Fair Premium List, 1880, p. 25.

Closely connected with the fair's attempts to encourage diversified farming were its attempt to encourage the self-sufficient farmer. This practice was started in 1853 when the fair offered premiums for vegetables, fruits, cured meats, and household manufactures.⁷³ No special emphasis was placed upon these exhibits, however, and only premiums were used as a means to encourage the farmer's production of these articles. These premiums were usually below those offered for livestock and field crops. But in 1896 a special seventy-five dollar premium was offered for the best individual display of agricultural products, garden vegetables, fruits, and home industries.⁷⁴ This premium was designed not only to encourage self-sufficient farming, but also to discourage the state's growing two-crop system.

The farm woman was not ignored by the fair, for above all the fair's management desired to make the fair a family event. Ladies could enter their handiwork in several classes. Among these classes created especially for feminine exhibitors were preserves and pickles, canned fruits and vegetables, needle work, embroidery, art work, and baked goods. Premiums offered for these goods were low, usually only one to three dollars, but they enabled the entire family to participate in the competition.⁷⁵

Encouraging the use of agricultural machinery was a major part of the fair's task of agricultural promotion. The fair's accomplishments in this field are among its most significant. It encouraged the development of new

⁷³ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 5, 1853.

⁷⁴ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1896, p. 22.

⁷⁵ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1860, p. 10.

machinery and the improvement of the old. It served as a testing ground for farm implements and as a market place for those wishing to buy or sell agricultural implements. It displayed to thousands of farmers the new and best in agricultural implements from both North Carolina and other states.

The fair usually offered premiums for three basic classes of agricultural implements, with several sub-divisions in each class. The first class was composed of plows, cultivators, harrows, and other implements used for tilling the soil. The second class was comprised of farm vehicles such as wagons and dump carts. The third class was divided into two groups, hand and horse powered farm machinery. In this class were corn shellers, cotton gins, threshing machines, broadcasting machines, hay presses, stalk cutters, and other implements.⁷⁶ This remained the basic classification of exhibits of implements during the century, though minor changes were made from year to year. Premiums offered ranged from five to twenty-five dollars, varying from class to class and from year to year.

Exhibits from out-of-state firms completely dominated all classes of agricultural implements at the ante-bellum fairs and received little enough native competition after the war. Implements from several Maryland and Virginia firms were displayed at the first fair.⁷⁷ Firms from Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Mississippi were also represented at the ante-bellum fairs.⁷⁸

After the war, firms from other states including Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Connecticut, and Ohio exhibited their products. The big names in the industry such as John Deere and McCormick began to enter

⁷⁶ Semi-Weekly Raleigh Register, October 24, 1855.

⁷⁷ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 19, 1853.

⁷⁸ Ibid., October 27, 1858.

exhibits during the seventies. By 1877 several of these firms were sponsoring premiums for crops as well as displaying their products, a practice that was continued for the remainder of the century.⁷⁹

Implements of native manufacture, though badly outnumbered, were exhibited at the ante-bellum fairs.⁸⁰ It was not until after the war, however, that implements from other states received any real competition from those of native manufacture. For the first three years after the fair's re-establishment, implements of native manufacture dominated all classes largely because few Northern firms chose to exhibit their products.⁸¹ By 1873 implements from other states had again gained ascendancy. North Carolina manufacturers continued to be represented, however, especially in the classes of light machinery and implements.⁸² Also, as more agricultural implement dealers became established in North Carolina, they displayed many of the implements manufactured in other states, thus eliminating the need for the manufacturer to maintain his own exhibit.

The fair provided a testing ground for agricultural implements entered as exhibits. Thus it enabled the farmer to see the comparative performance ability of machines made by different manufacturers. Items proving to be of particular merit were highly recommended by the judges to the farmers of the state.⁸³

⁷⁹ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1877, pp. 21-28.

⁸⁰ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 27, 1858.

⁸¹ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), September 20, 1873.

⁸² News and Observer, October 19, 1880.

⁸³ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 27, 1858.

Though most of the implements exhibited were of the type that one would expect at a nineteenth century agricultural fair, the prototypes of implements that were perfected only in the twentieth century could also be seen. In 1853 the fair offered a premium for the best portable steam engine "applicable to agricultural purposes generally, as a substitute for horse power."⁸⁴ Though engines were shown at the fairs throughout the century, all were of a stationary type. Premiums were offered for potato diggers, and some were displayed.⁸⁵ In 1873 a "cow milking machine" from England was exhibited at the fair.⁸⁶ Nor were North Carolina inventors idle, for in 1883 a cotton picker from Scotland Neck was exhibited.⁸⁷ So interested was the fair in seeing new implements invented that in 1874 it offered a twenty-five dollar premium for the best agricultural implement patented within the past two years.⁸⁸

The fair's efforts to encourage the invention of new implements were not very successful. Portable steam engines were never put to agricultural uses. The cow milking machine and the cotton picker were years ahead of their time. Their impracticality is indicated by the fact they were only displayed at one fair. No significant new farm implement was able to claim the premium offered for such, though the premium was awarded each year, usually to some type of plow.

⁸⁴ Ibid., October 5, 1853.

⁸⁵ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1860, p. 7.

⁸⁶ Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 15, 1873.

⁸⁷ News and Observer, October 20, 1883.

⁸⁸ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1874, p. 23.

Although no significant agricultural machinery was developed as a result of the fair, improvements in existing farm implements were encouraged. This was especially true of the lighter farm implements used in tilling the soil such as plows, harrows, and cultivators. Several improved plows of native manufacture recommended by the fair's judges became popular with the farmers of the state.⁸⁹

The fair encouraged the use of agricultural machinery by simply exhibiting the products of various farm implement manufacturers across the nation. The exhibits of these various implements, combined with the test required of them, enabled many farmers to see the advantage of mechanized farming. The fair thus helped create in the farmers of the state an interest in farming with machinery. The creation of this interest was a major goal of the fair, and it was successfully achieved.

Intermingled with the fair's efforts to promote agriculture were some aspects of the commercial fair. Fertilizer, guano, farm implements, and other products designed for the farm were marketed at the fair by their manufacturers and dealers. The farmer, too, was able to market his produce at the fairs. Beginning in the ante-bellum period, farmers could sell their exhibits of farm produce, livestock, or other products at auction. The auction was usually held on the last day of the fair. This feature was stressed more after 1880 when the number of days on which auctions were held were increased.⁹⁰ By this action the fair's management hoped to make the fair an important market of farm produce. Their hopes were not fulfilled.

⁸⁹ Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 27, 1858.

⁹⁰ N. C. State Fair Premium List, 1880, p. 12.

Though some farmers did use the fair as a means of marketing their produce, the fair never became an important market for the farmer. Its commercial importance in the promotion of agricultural products, however, is attested to by the large number of exhibits made by firms from North Carolina and other states which produced agricultural implements and supplies.

It is extremely difficult to determine exactly to what extent the fair influenced agricultural development in nineteenth century North Carolina inasmuch as the fair was merely one part of the state's agricultural reform movement. Other forces were also encouraging reform during this period. Among them were the state's leading farmers, the county and area fairs, the few agricultural journals published in the state, private agricultural organizations, and state agricultural institutions. The effect of their combined efforts was astounding, but it is almost impossible to assign each force an exact fraction of the net result. Nevertheless, some conclusions concerning the fair's role in this general reform movement can be drawn.

The fair's major significance as a contributor to the agricultural reform movement in the state can be attributed to its excellent leadership. Led by the state's most progressive citizens, the fair was always in the vanguard of the reform movement. It took the lead in introducing blooded cattle to the state because its leaders were active in the improvement of cattle. It encouraged diversified farming because its leaders favored and practiced it. It encouraged the use of cover crops because its leaders favored their use. It encouraged the use of agricultural machinery because its leaders favored mechanized farming. In short, the fair tried to en-

courage the state's farmers to adopt the methods which its leaders advocated and found successful. Because its leaders were usually the state's best farmers, the majority of the innovations it encouraged were good.

The fair's efforts to introduce agricultural reforms to the state were more successful when they demonstrated tangible evidence of the superiority of the new to the old. Its successful efforts to introduce blooded livestock to the state, which received gubernatorial praise as early as 1873, illustrate this fact.⁹¹ Faced with the visual evidence of the superiority of blooded cattle, the farmer naturally began to desire to improve his stock.

The efforts of the fair to encourage the use of agricultural implements were successful for the same reason. The farmer could see the newest implements in use at the fairs. If they were superior to the implements he used on his farm, he was forced to acknowledge the fact.

The exhibits displayed by the fertilizer companies encouraged the use of commercial crop dressing by the state's farmers partly because they were tangible. The farmer could see and examine the product he was being asked to buy, even though he could not actually see the results that would come from its use. Exhibits of crops produced by scientific farming methods provided the farmer with tangible evidence of their superiority.

The fair's efforts to instruct the farmer in the use of new methods of farming, partly because they involved ideas, or the intangible, met with less success. Such instructions were not visually presented to the farmer. The speeches, essays, and meetings which were used to instruct

⁹¹"Governor's Message," Executive and Legislative Documents (1873-74), Doc. No. 1, pp. 24-25.

the farmer in the use of new farming methods used words as a means of explaining these new methods to the farmer. There was nothing tangible for him to grasp. The experiments combined with these lectures in the latter part of the century helped to alter this situation.

The necessity for the fair to depend on a small minority of farmers reduced its significance. Most of the farmers who supported the fair came from Wake and its neighboring counties or, at least, from the eastern part of the state. The press of the western section of the state blamed the Society's leaders for the reluctance of that area's farmers to patronize the fair. The western press charged that the easterners controlled the fair's leadership and that eastern exhibitors were shown marked favoritism.⁹² As a result the fair's leaders had to continually plead for the support of all the state's farmers. As late as 1893 this plea was still being sounded.⁹³

Because the fair's leaders were operators of large farms and usually wealthy men, they mistakenly adopted some policies which ran counter to the interest of the more numerous subsistence farmers. The emphasis placed upon racing and thoroughbred horses is a prime example of a mistake made by its leadership. The fair's leaders also unintentionally damaged the fair by dominating the competition for premiums. This domination was good in one respect, for it allowed the average farmer to see these superior exhibits. But this trend increased rapidly in the eighties and nineties when such large farms as the Biltmore Estates and Julian S. Carr's Oconeechee began to exhibit at the fair. As a result of the monopoly of premiums

⁹² Daily Sentinel (Raleigh), October 19, 1875.

⁹³ News and Observer, October 19, 1893.

obtained by the large farmer, many of whom were Society leaders, the small farmers were discouraged from entering exhibits. By 1897 the farm journals were suggesting that the situation must be remedied if the fair was to survive.⁹⁴

Several other mistakes in policy were made by the fair's leaders. They did not co-operate as fully as they should have with agricultural organizations such as the Grange and the Alliance. Also, there is little doubt that the western farmer was somewhat mistreated, for eastern farmers did dominate the fair and try to keep its control in their hands. But perhaps their major failure was that they looked outside the state for reform. They tried to introduce new methods, new machinery, new crops, and new breeds of livestock from without. With the exception of machinery and methods, nothing was done to encourage improvement from within. Very little was done to encourage the development of new machinery or farming methods within the state. The development of new breeds of livestock within the state was completely overlooked. The same was true of field crops.

The fair's significance as a single factor in the agricultural reform movement was undoubtedly greater in the ante-bellum than in the postwar period for several reasons. During the ante-bellum years, though several agricultural journals were published, few were read by the state's average farmer. There were no state supported agricultural institutions. The era of the large private agricultural organization was yet to come. A medium through which the state's farmers could be acquainted with the rapid agricultural advancements being made was needed. The fair did much to supply that medium.

⁹⁴ Progressive Farmer, XI (November 2, 1897), 2.

The fair's contributions to the state's agricultural development were greater after than before the war, but its share in the total agricultural reform movement was less. It ceased to be as concerned with the instruction of the farmer in newer agricultural methods. Much of this work was then done by farm organizations and state agricultural institutions. Implement dealers established throughout the state reduced the significance of this phase of the fair's work. It became more than ever the show place of the state's agricultural development. The exhibits displayed at each fair made the farmer aware of and caused him to take pride in the state's agricultural progress and to hope for continued progress in the future. The fair made its major contribution to the promotion of agriculture in North Carolina by helping to create within the state's farmers this interest in better agricultural practices.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

That the state fair definitely influenced the agricultural and industrial development of North Carolina during the years from 1853 to 1899 is an undeniable fact. The average fair ran five days and had an average daily attendance of at least 6,000 persons. As there were thirty-seven fairs, one can easily calculate that there were 1,110,000 admissions to the nineteenth century fair. Those attending the fair came from all sections of the state and from all classes of the state's social structure. To assume that the exhibits of livestock, field crops, farm implements, and industrial products with which its visitors were confronted had little or no effect upon them would be sheer folly. Yet it is extremely hard to determine to what extent the fair influenced the state's economic growth.

Though the fair influenced the state's economic development throughout the nineteenth century, it can be roughly divided into four distinct periods or stages of development. Each stage coincides, to a large degree, with a corresponding stage in the state's general agricultural development. The fair both encouraged and reflected this general development, exerting more influence on some of its particular aspects than upon others. Within each of these stages the fair made some attempt to promote the state's industrial growth, but these attempts were of a markedly secondary nature, as agricultural promotion was its primary goal. The four stages into which the nineteenth century fair can be divided are as follows: the ante-bellum period (1853-1860), which coincides with the agricultural renaissance which

occurred within the state during the fifties; the immediate postwar period (1869-1873), which coincides roughly with the period of agricultural reconstruction following the Civil War; the period of Thomas M. Holt's presidency (1873-1884), which corresponds with the years in which the foundations of modern, commercial, scientific farming were laid; and the post-Holt years (1885-1899), which correspond with a period of continued improvements in agricultural methods coupled with the farmer's increased efforts to improve the state's agricultural conditions through political action.

During the decade of 1850 to 1860, the state experienced an agricultural renaissance of which the fair was both a result and cause. The use of manures, better plowing and drainage methods, better seed, and more machinery by the state's farmers underwent a noticeable increase. As a result, between 1850 and 1860 cotton production was increased from 73,845 to 145,514 bales, tobacco production from 11,984,786 to 32,853,250 pounds, wheat production from 2,130,102 to 4,743,706 bushels, and corn production from 27,941,051 to 30,078,564 bushels. The production of other crops such as peas and beans, Irish and sweet potatoes, and various grains were also substantially increased.¹

The fair played a significant role in this period of rapid agricultural development. With the exception of a few agricultural journals, the fair represented the only state wide medium through which the farmer could become acquainted with and be instructed in agricultural reform. Premiums for essays and experiments concerning agricultural subjects, annual addresses, and lectures at the Society's nightly meetings were all employed

¹Cornelius O. Cathey, Agricultural Developments in North Carolina, 1783-1860, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), pp. 202-03.

by the fair to instruct the farmer in the use of scientific agricultural methods. Such attempts at instruction proved too stiff and formal to appeal to the average farmer, and they were limited in their effectiveness. They did, however, encourage the exchange of ideas between the larger and more progressive farmers from various sections of the state.²

The fair's major contribution to the agricultural renaissance of the fifties was the interest in agricultural reform that it created. This interest was created largely by exhibits of livestock, field crops, vegetables, farm implements, and other items. Such exhibits were more effective in pressing home to the yeoman farmer the advantages of agricultural reform than were the more formal essays, experiments, and lectures which appealed largely to the educated planter class. Ante-bellum livestock exhibits, though not spectacular, represented the best the state had to offer. This was especially true of the exhibits of cattle, swine, and horses. The farmer viewing these exhibits was forced to make a mental comparison of the stock he saw displayed and the stock on his farm. The outcome of such a comparison was at least an interest in improved livestock. Exhibits of field crops provided proof that "book farming" was not a humbug and helped to arouse the farmer's interest in scientific farming methods. Exhibits of farm implements from both native and out-of-state manufacturers and dealers acquainted the farmer with the latest in agricultural machinery. By testing these implements in actual use and recommending those which performed well to the farmer, the fair attempted to encourage the use of the best, as well as the latest implements. In short, by providing visual proof to the state's farmers that reforms were both needed and practical,

² Reconstructed Farmer, I (July, 1869), 86.

the fair made a major contribution to the growing spirit of reform and improved agricultural conditions which were so evident in the eighteen-fifties. Thomas Ruffin recognized this fact as early as 1858 and expressed the belief that more was done to "advance the industrial pursuits of our people" in the first five years of the fair's existence than in the forty previous years.³

The fair's attempts to promote industry in this period were inconsequential. Industrial exhibits were few, and the large majority of those displayed were the products of local artisans. Such was to be expected in a state whose economy was overwhelmingly agricultural. The few industrial exhibits obtained, however, did accurately reflect the industrial development of the state during that era, though they did little to directly encourage it.

The years from 1869 to 1873 were transition years for the fair. During this period the fair's physical development was of major significance. Re-established in 1869 after an eight year interruption caused by the Civil War and Reconstruction, the fair's old physical plant proved inadequate to accommodate its growing attendance. This fact led to the fair's relocation on a larger site in 1873. This physical transition allowed the fair to continue to expand throughout the century.

The fair's methods of advocating agricultural reforms also underwent a transition. The methods used to instruct the farmer in the use of scientific farming methods were gradually discontinued, with the exception of the nightly lectures and the annual address, both of which were modified. Exhibits of agricultural implements, livestock, field crops, and

³Weekly North Carolina Standard, October 27, 1858.

vegetables became the major means by which the fair sought to create within the farmer an interest in agricultural reform. Thus, though the fair continued to acquaint the farmer with the latest agricultural practices, it imparted less formal instruction in their use.

During the immediate postwar period of the fair's growth, the state was struggling to regain the level of agricultural production it had achieved before the war. It achieved this goal in the production of cotton and oats by 1870, but the production of other crops and livestock remained below the pre-war level.⁴ By encouraging the adoption of improved agricultural methods through its various exhibits and premiums and by placing an emphasis on improved per acre production, the fair did much to help in the process of rebuilding the state's agricultural economy. Governor Ted R. Caldwell recognized the fair's role in this struggle to rebuild the state and highly praised it for making known to the people the agricultural and industrial advances that were being made.⁵

The state regained and surpassed the ante-bellum production levels for most crops during the years from 1873 to 1885, the period of Thomas Holt's presidency of the Society. During these years, also, the foundations of the state's modern livestock industry were laid, advances in agricultural methods continued to be made, and tenant farming became firmly entrenched in the state, bringing with it a one crop system of agriculture and the crop-loan credit system. The fair played an active role in these developments, encouraging some and discouraging others.

⁴ Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina, The History of a Southern State (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 490. Hereinafter cited as Lefler, North Carolina, The History of a Southern State; A Compendium of the Ninth Census (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1873), pp. 694-701. Hereinafter cited as A Compendium of the Ninth Census.

⁵ "Governor's Message," Executive and Legislative Documents (1873-1874), Doc. No. 1, pp. 24-25.

The census of 1880 indicated that the state had surpassed its ante-bellum production of milch cows, mules and asses, and working oxen and cattle. Horses, swine, and "other" cattle were slightly less numerous than they had been before the war. The total value of all livestock on farms was \$22,414,659, nearly half a million dollars more than the value of livestock in 1870, but considerably less than the value of the state's livestock in 1860.⁶ More important than the numerical growth of the state's livestock, however, was the introduction of purebred strains. The period from 1875 to 1900 has been called "a pioneer introductory period" during which "a few leading pure breeds" were introduced.⁷ The fair was extremely active in this attempt to encourage the improvement of livestock. Jersey and Dutch Belted cattle and Berkshire and Jersey Red swine were first introduced to the state by exhibits from out-of-state stock farms at the fair. In addition to exhibiting animals from other states, the fair continued to display the best animals to be found in North Carolina and to encourage better animal husbandry practices.

Basically because the crop-lien system forced the farmer to plant a money crop, the production of cotton and tobacco increased tremendously. The state's cotton production in 1880 of 389,998 bales tripled that of 1860. The twenty-seven million pounds of tobacco produced in 1880 did not equal the state's 1860 production, but more than doubled its production of 1870.⁸ By recommending the use of improved seeds, better cultivating

⁶ Report on the Productions of Agriculture as Returned at the Tenth Census (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), pp. 103, 141. Hereinafter cited as Report on the Production of Agriculture, 1880: A Compendium of the Ninth Census, pp. 207-208.

⁷ Robert S. Curtis, The History of Livestock in North Carolina (Raleigh: Agricultural Experiment Station, North Carolina State College, 1956), p. 17.

⁸ Lefler, North Carolina, The History of a Southern State, p. 490.

practices, and commercial fertilizers in the production of these crops and awarding large premiums for the best per acre yields of each, the fair was certainly a factor in their increased production.

The production of cereals and other crops approached ante-bellum levels during these years, with the exception of that of wheat. The emphasis placed upon the cultivation of cotton and tobacco, however, kept them from regaining the prominence they had held prior to the war. The fair definitely encouraged their production, offering premiums for the best production of a variety of crops on one farm. This effort was largely unsuccessful because under the crop-lien system the farmer was forced to plant cotton or tobacco instead of being allowed to practice diversified farming. It is unfortunate that this program of the fair failed so completely, for the almost exclusive production of money crops retarded the state's overall agricultural advancement and kept its farmers almost constantly in debt.

Agricultural methods, however, continued to improve within the state, and the fair was responsible for an undetermined amount of these improvements. The Grange, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, and the department's experiment station began to enter exhibits at the fair in order to encourage the adoption of modern agricultural methods. The fair's exhibits of superior crops and the premiums offered for them also influenced agricultural improvements. The use of fertilizers was adopted by most of the state's farmers. For example, in 1880 they spent \$2,111,767 for commercial crop dressings.⁹ In fact, farmers were beginning to place too much dependence in commercial fertilizers and ignore the use of manures, compost, and other means of improving their land. The fair contributed to this development by

⁹Report on the Production of Agriculture, 1880, p. 103.

exhibiting fertilisers from both native and out-of-state manufacturers. These manufacturers and their dealers also awarded premiums for crops produced with their products, especially crops of tobacco and cotton.

The value of implements possessed by the state's farmers increased from \$5,873,942 in 1860 and \$4,062,111 in 1870 to \$6,076,476 in 1880.¹⁰ The fair played an important role in bringing about this increase. It exhibited implements from several states, especially from the states of the northern Middle West. It placed special emphasis on the development of new and improved implements and continued to test all implements displayed for the benefit of the farmer. The fair served as a medium through which thousands of farmers from all sections of the state became acquainted with the latest and best agricultural implements.

Attempts to improve the fair's industrial exhibits made during Holt's administration met with some success. This was basically because this period coincided with the movement for an industrialized New South and the beginnings of the state's "industrial revolution." The number of exhibits from tobacco, textile, and fertilizer firms increased, yet a large majority of the state's industrial firms continued to disregard the fair. The exhibits obtained, however, made known to the people of North Carolina the state's increasing industrialization and caused them to take pride in this development.

Using the policies adopted in the Holt administration, the fair continued to influence the state's agricultural development during the years from 1885 to 1899. Its role in the improvement of the state's livestock became even more significant, and received gubernatorial praise.¹¹ The

¹⁰ Ibid.; A Compendium of the Ninth Census, p. 690.

¹¹ News and Observer, October 13, 1891.

average farmer was quickly acquainted with breeds of cattle such as Guernseys, Ayrshires, Holsteins, and Herefords, which were displayed at the fair by the state's more progressive farmers. Cattle exhibited by out-of-state farms included the Brown Swiss, Black Angus, and Holstein-Friesian breeds. Large exhibits of Jerseys, introduced at earlier fairs, attested to the fair's significance as a factor in the improvement of the state's cattle. Poland Chinas, Victorias, and Duroc-Jerseys were among the several breeds of swine that the fair added to its premium list. Jersey Reds and Berkshires, two breeds of swine introduced at earlier fairs, were exhibited in large numbers. By far the best medium through which the farmer could become acquainted with so many breeds of purebred animals, the fair was a definite factor in the increase in value of the state's livestock, poultry, and bees from \$22,414,659 in 1880 to \$30,106,173 in 1900.¹²

The fact that North Carolina farmers began to adopt a more mechanized system of farming is indicated by the increase in the value of their implements from \$6,078,476 in 1880 to \$9,072,600 in 1900.¹³ The fair aided this development by continuing to acquaint the farmer with the latest agricultural implements during this period. The invention of new implements and the improvement of the old continued to be stressed. The number of implements exhibited increased substantially, and several big name companies such as John Deere and McCormick began to enter exhibits.

The state's production of cotton and tobacco continued to increase, and by 1900 the production of cotton had reached 460,000 bales and that of tobacco, 128,000,000 pounds. The production of other crops increased

¹² Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, VII, Agriculture, 1909 and 1910 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 220-21.

¹³ Ibid.

but little after 1880, however.¹⁴ This rapid increase in cotton and tobacco production and neglect of subsistence crops were the results of the crop-lien and tenant systems. Though the fair offered premiums for both the money and subsistence crops, it had little effect on this phase of the state's agricultural development. The economic forces that maintained the crop-lien system were too great to be affected by premiums offered by a fair for either subsistence or money crops.

During the years from 1885 to 1899, the fair continued to urge the adoption of improved farming practices through its premiums, exhibits, and lectures. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture continued to work through the fair in its attempts to reach large numbers of the state's farmers, and held several farmer's institutes at the fair. The Agricultural and Mechanical College, the experiment station, and the Farmer's Alliance also used the fair as a means of encouraging reforms. The fact that these organizations and institutions used the fair in carrying out their work indicates its significance in the agricultural reform movement.

Despite the fact that during the early nineties many of the state's farmers began to turn to political action to find a solution for their agricultural problems, the fair continued to stress improved agricultural technology. It encouraged this shift to political action only by providing a meeting place for members of the Alliance, many of whom advocated political solutions for the state's agricultural dilemma. Started as a means of encouraging the adoption of improved agricultural practices, the fair wisely remained that throughout the century.

The fair's role as an industrial promoter remained relatively insignificant during this period. Bennahan Cameron, president of the Society

¹⁴Yeffler, North Carolina, The History of a Southern State, p. 490.

in 1896, met almost total failure in his campaign to attract industrial exhibitors. The absorption of smaller firms, many of which had exhibited at the fair, by larger firms, few of which exhibited at the fair, cost the fair some exhibits. Depression in the nineties also proved detrimental. But the failure of most of the state's firms to exhibit remained the biggest hindrance to the fair's efforts at industrial promotion. Furniture exhibits, however, increased during this period, largely because that industry was just beginning its rapid development and recognized the advantage of advertising at the fair. Though it did little to directly promote the growth of the state's industries, the fair managed to mirror the state's continued industrial growth. By 1899, it showed signs of becoming a more significant industrial exposition.

The fair's influence on the state's economic development during the last half of the nineteenth century, though impossible to determine exactly, was undoubtedly of major significance. It did little to promote directly the growth of industry, but by serving as an advertising agency for exhibiting firms it acquainted thousands with the state's growing industrial economy. The fair made several outstanding contributions to the state's agricultural development. Thousands were acquainted with the best agricultural implements available in the nation through its exhibits. Its work in the introduction of blooded livestock was a major factor in the laying of the foundations of that industry within the state. Through its premiums, exhibits, lectures, and other methods it interested many in the adoption of agricultural reforms. It provided a medium through which such institutions as the department of agriculture, the experiment station, and the Agricultural and Mechanical College were able to work with thousands of

farmers. It served as a co-ordinator for the various phases of the agricultural reform movement and helped to bring reforms to all sections of the state. J. W. Carter of the Richmond Times was absolutely correct when he stated in 1896 that the North Carolina State Fair was "one of the best fairs I have seen in the South."¹⁵

¹⁵ News and Observer, October 13, 1891.

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