

August

Southwold's Enduring Tradition - Shedden Fair

In 1792, the first Agricultural Society was formed in Niagara-on-the-Lake (at that time it was called "Newark"), and this began a tradition of organizations devoted to improving agricultural life.

A major activity of these groups was the annual and semi-annual fairs and exhibitions. Whether bringing people from across the road or across the province together, fairs allowed people to share their experiences and knowledge and to feel part of a larger whole.

The Shedden Fair traces its roots back to the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society, which was founded in 1854 to support local farmers and showcase agricultural advancements.

Prominent Southwold pioneers affixed their signatures to documents that formed the first Agricultural Branch Society of the Townships of Southwold and Dunwich of the Agricultural Society, April 1, 1854:

John Horton, Amasa Wood, John Williams, Moses Warner, Zechariah McCallum, Malcolm Campbell, Arch Thompson, Arch Patterson, Nicol McColl, Colin McIntyre, Elisha Best, William Sells, Henry Hamilton, Don Carmichael, James Ferguson, John Lumley, John McPhail and Arch Carswell

The early Fair was located in Iona on what was later part of Percy Whall's farm.

About 1896 the Fair was moved from Iona to Shedden on land rented from Mr. Dougald Brown. The Fair's growth continued there until 1922.

In 1922, William Francis then rented to them a portion of his farm northwest of the village of Shedden (*now Francis St.*) and next to the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. There for the next thirty years the Fair grew in exhibits, attendances and finances.

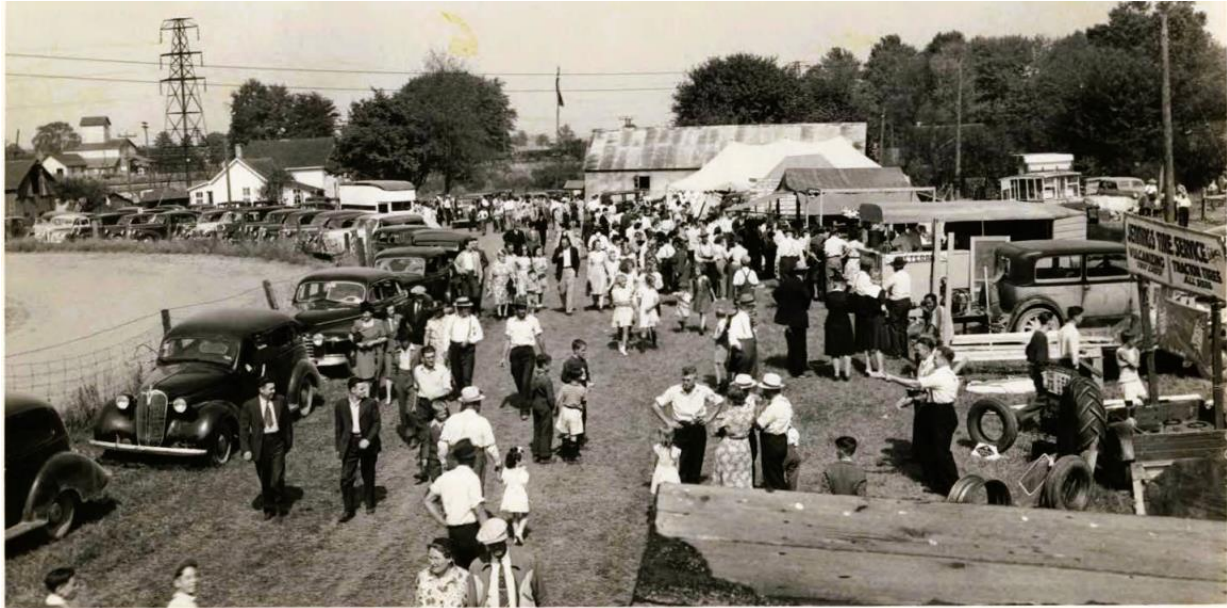


Photo of Shedden Fair (circa 1946) William Francis Property

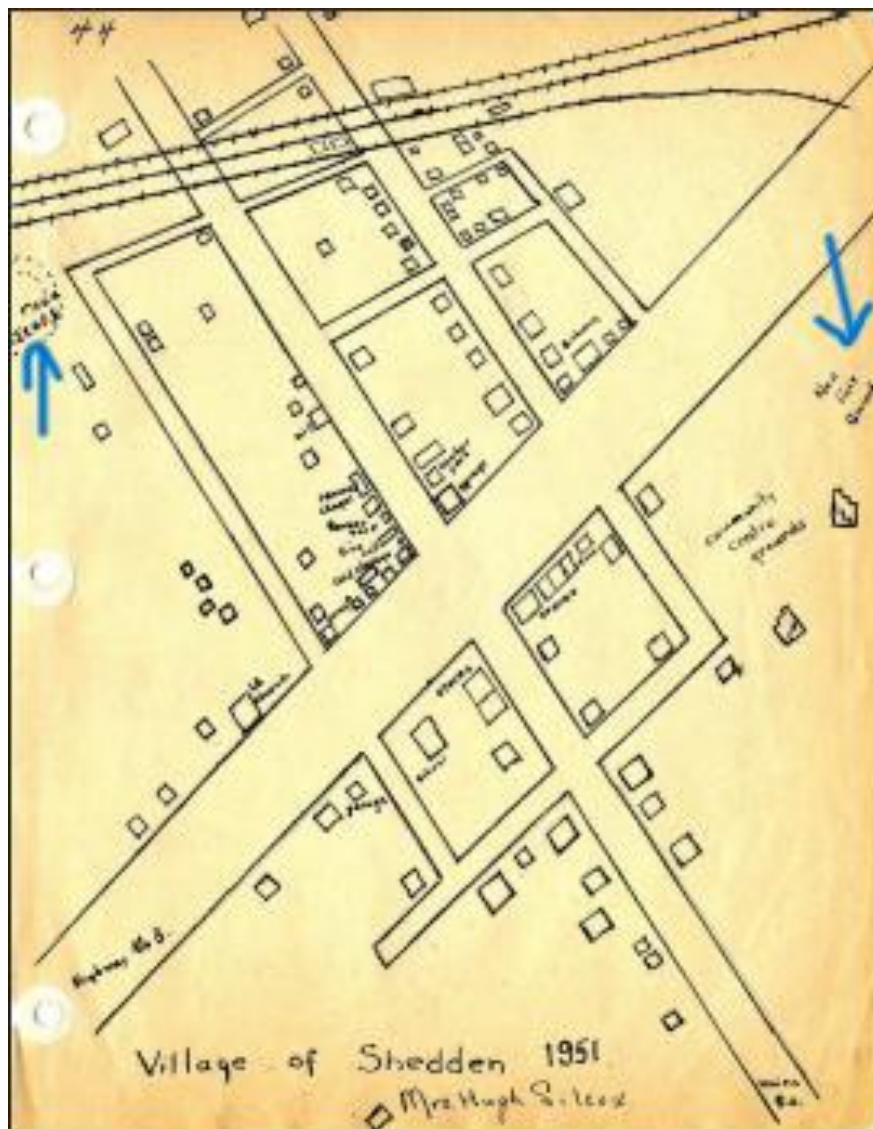
The fair was held on the property of William Francis on the northwest corner of Shedden. This area is now the end of Francis Street. The railway can barely be seen between the hydro tower and the white building on the top left corner of the photo. This picture was taken with a view to the north east from the fairgrounds.

The barn in the top centre of the photo is approximately where the back side of Ken and Doris Howe's house (9711 Francis St.) sits now. The race track on the left ran parallel to the train track. Ken Howe remembers that a ball diamond was set in the middle of the race track. Shedden Fair thrived at the Francis property until 1951 and a new opportunity presented itself.

A Permanent Location

In 1951 Fair officials purchased land on No. 3 Highway, just east of the village of Shedden. This was the same property previously leased from Mr. Dougald Brown for the Shedden Fairs of 1896 to 1922. It was a location long coveted by the Agricultural Society!

A hand drawn map of Shedden prepared by Mrs. Hugh Silcox in 1951 shows the locations of the fair grounds on Francis property (*left arrow*) and the site of the new location (*right arrow*), just east of the village.



Volunteers canvassed virtually the whole of the township within two afternoons and raised more than \$2500, \$500 more than the purchase price of the twenty acres. There was great excitement across the Southwold community as the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society began to visualize what was needed to make their new property the best agricultural facility in Elgin County.



Planning New Shedden Fair Grounds

A committee from the Fair Board included C. E. Moore, Cecil Miller, Farnell Nimmo, Bruce Leeson, Clayton Chamberlain, Lawrence Stafford, Dean Bogart, Morley Adams, Frank Miller, Kenneth McLaughlin and a representative from the Department of Agriculture laid out the grounds.

On September 4, 1951, farmers and businessmen from all over Southwold Township banded together and sent sixteen tractors on to the twenty-acre plot. Within seven hours they plowed and leveled the large chunk of pasture land into a new area; the



Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society Fair Grounds. The last fair on the Francis property was held that September.



This is the view facing east on the new fair grounds with Harold Koyle's barn and silo in the distance.

A New Beginning!

The 98th Shedden Fair was held on the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society's own Shedden Fair Grounds, in September, 1952!

Newspaper accounts of the property's historic first event highlighted its promising future, stating, "The new grounds are spacious. There is plenty of parking space, ample room for future erection of exhibition and livestock buildings, an excellent midway setting, a ball field and one of the best half mile tracks in the district."

"The Fair Board purchased the grounds and plans an improvement program to be carried out through future years. The layout is perfect for a fall fair such as that held at Shedden."



Shedden Fair 1952 on the new grounds on Hwy #3 east of Shedden

The 1953 Fair was Shedden's first two-day Fair. Blessed with clear skies and ideal weather, this was the greatest in its history surpassing all fairs before it! Gate receipt financial figures doubled those of 1952!

Centennial Fair - 1954

As their newly developed fairgrounds began to take shape, the leaders of the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society turned their attention to organizing the association's landmark Centennial Celebration.

By the time of the centennial celebrations in 1954, the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society had transformed its twenty-acre grounds into a permanent home for the annual fair. Several structures stood as testaments to the region's ingenuity and resourcefulness. The Exhibits Building—once a fixture at the William Francis fair site—was carefully relocated and restored to serve its purpose anew. A modest building, formerly belonging to the New York Central Railroad, was also acquired and repurposed as the Society's Office, anchoring the grounds with a sense of permanence and progress.

The Shedden Women's Institute pledged \$500 toward the construction of a facility dedicated to serving meals and refreshments to fairgoers. True to community spirit, a work bee was organized, and by the summer of 1953, a handsome aluminum structure—soon known as the “Dining Hall” stood ready to welcome visitors with warmth and hospitality.

Members of the Shedden Women's Institute and the Shedden United Church Women's Association joined forces to provide fairgoers with deliciously prepared meals and refreshments. Their collaborative efforts were met with such enthusiasm and success that the two groups committed to continuing this popular and much-appreciated addition to the Fair in the years that followed.

Bleachers were constructed to accommodate up to 300 fairgoers, offering a prime vantage point for viewing events at the racetrack.

A 30-by-40-foot cement block structure was erected to serve as the Livestock Building, providing a sturdy and functional space for housing animals during the fair.

After three years of dedicated effort, the Board proudly unveiled what it regarded as one of the finest half-mile racecourses in the region. Built with foresight and enthusiasm, the track boasted a broad layout—wide enough to accommodate the increasingly popular mechanical starting gate—ushering in a new era for race-day excitement and professionalism.

In September 1954, the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society marked its 100th year with a vibrant centennial celebration that reflected a deep-rooted commitment to farming, innovation, and community. With their fairgrounds newly expanded and modernized, Society leaders transformed that year's fair into a living tribute to the region's agricultural legacy.

The event showcased a rich variety of exhibitions—from livestock and field crops to home craft and junior competitions—designed to reflect the evolving spirit of rural life. School children played an active role in the festivities, offering displays and performances that highlighted youth involvement in agriculture. Visitors were treated to historical displays, special centennial souvenirs, and a program steeped in pride and local tradition.

This milestone fair served not only as a look back at a century of dedication, but also as a bold statement of confidence in the future of farming in Elgin County.

The pièce de résistance was the stately new entrance to the fairgrounds—gracefully designed and symbolizing a proud new chapter in the Society's history. A striking set of wrought iron gates and a

graceful arch were installed at the entrance to the fairgrounds. Anchored between sturdy fieldstone pillars and framed by a classic white picket fence, the new gateway represented both a tribute to tradition and a symbol of enduring pride. At night, soft spotlights cast their glow from the lower iron posts, lending the arch a dignified presence to welcome fairgoers with charm and distinction.



Set into the ornamental stone gateposts were two distinguished bronze plaques. One proudly listed the names of the 1954 Officers who guided the Society through its centennial year. The other featured the formal inscription: “Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society, 1854–1954, presented by the Ontario Department of Agriculture in recognition of one hundred years of service. Sept. 22, 1954.”

As a tangible expression of support, the Ontario Department of Agriculture also awarded a \$1,000 grant to the Society—funds that helped bring the commemorative gates to fruition!

At the dedication of the new gate and entrance, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Fletcher S. "Tommy" Thomas saluted the achievements of the Society and made a bold prediction on the impressive new Shedden Fair Grounds.



"Those fair grounds could and should be developed into a community centre for the entire district. I hope that I will live to see the day when there will be a year-round recreational centre for the youth who must assume the responsibilities of Tomorrow."

Ontario Agricultural Minister F.S. (Tommy) Thomas (September 18, 1954)

Presiding over the centennial celebration Shedden Fair President Roy Inch wrote,



"The Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society, known to many as the Shedden Fair, is proud of the development made since 1854 and with the place the fair has made for itself as a showplace for livestock and crops throughout Elgin County. There has been a big increase in the number of classes available to an exhibitor for his entries. The assistance and attendance of junior agriculturalists and school children has greatly assisted too in the growth of our fair."

Local newspapers have often profiled activities at the annual Shedden Fair. The Centennial Celebration in 1954 provided many images of the fair for newspaper subscribers!



Seen here in a 1954 St. Thomas Times-Journal news article, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture specialist, William Babbitt (left) is assisted by Southwold judges Donald McArthur (centre) and Dean Bogart (right) in the judging of fruits and vegetables.



Events

As the Shedden Fair entered a new century of operation, the Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society established a permanent home. Over the ensuing seventy-five years, the fair has remained a vibrant thread in the fabric of the community. Beloved traditions were honored, fresh events emerged to reflect the changing times, and others gracefully stepped aside.

Over the years, various agriculture clubs were established to provide a showcase for local farms. Later, youth clubs encouraged young people in the raising of: cattle, dairy calf, horses, sheep, hogs, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, grains, fruits and vegetables.



The Elgin County 4-H Beef Club held their competitions at the Shedden Fair in 1979. Pictured here from the left are, Wayne Carroll, champion steer of the day, Wes Stafford, champion beef showman of the day, Bruce Amos, judge, of Woodstock, and Nancy McCallum, grand champion beef heifer.



These smiling youngsters are seen carrying some of their exhibits into the busy building early this morning. From left to right: Carol Beecroft, Iona Station; Marilyn Dawdy, Southwold; Douglas McLaughlin, Southwold; Pat Daugherty and his brother Roy, of Southwold. (Circa 1959)

Field Crop Competitions were started in 1928 and are a regular feature of Shedden Fair.

The Shedden Grain Club made a good showing at the Shedden Fair in 1949. Shown (*left – right*) are: Clair Oldham, Lawrence Station, who won first prize for his oats in the Grain Club; Don McArthur, assistant Agricultural representative, and David Bogart, Southwold Station, who won first prize for his sheaf in the Grain Club.



Women's exhibits included baking, butter, sewing, fine arts and crafts, flowers and fruits.



Three young Shedden Fair goers view cakes and pies at the Shedden Fair in 1959



Shedden Fair Official, Melba Marr showed off the prize winning entry in the competition for Best Chocolate Cake. (Circa 1960)

Following World War II, Girls' Clubs were formed. A display of their projects; gardening, flower arrangements, sewing and baking were an interesting addition to the fair.



The Shedden Home Town Teen's Garden Club of girls had a display of garden vegetable at the Fair. The display was also at Western Far in London, where it received highest marks. Shown here are two members of the club, Mary Ellen Carrol (left) and Joyce Stafford, both of Shedden. (Circa 1950)



First prize for vegetables grown in competition by members of the Know-How Club went to Violet Marr, left, with Nancy Carr taking second. (Circa 1951)



The modern amenities of the Southwold Keystone Complex make displays of flowers, fruits, vegetables, crafts and sewing much easier to showcase!



Photos: Courtesy of Karen Collard



For decades, talented seamstresses and quilt makers from the region have proudly showcased their craftsmanship at the Shedden Fair. Each year, a vibrant array of artfully designed and exquisitely stitched pieces fills the display, celebrating creativity, tradition, and skill.

Since its opening in 1998, the Southwold Keystone Complex has served as a cornerstone of the Shedden Fair, providing ample space for vibrant exhibits and community celebrations. Its spacious layout has allowed displays to flourish, showcasing local creativity and tradition in grand style.



Photos: Courtesy of Karen Collard

Racing

Excellent programs of horse racing on the ½ mile track were popular events each year for the enjoyment of fair-goers. While horse racing owners were part of the regular fair circuit around southwestern Ontario, local horsemen from Southwold had their animals primed for the local Shedden Fair.

Roy Inch, Max Emery, Jim McLellan, Don Foster, Forbes Oldham and Ken Bogart were among the most passionate Southwold horsemen who trained and groomed their animals for Shedden competitions.



Roy Inch

Photo: Courtesy of the Inch Family



Horse racing action stirred up the dust at the Shedden Fair on the William Francis property. (Circa 1946)



The excitement of horses sprinting down the home stretch at Shedden Fair in 1959 was captured by Lorne Spicer. Note the WI “Dining Hall” in the near background while another iconic building, The Corral (Country Club) is to the right.

Photo: Courtesy of the Spicer Family

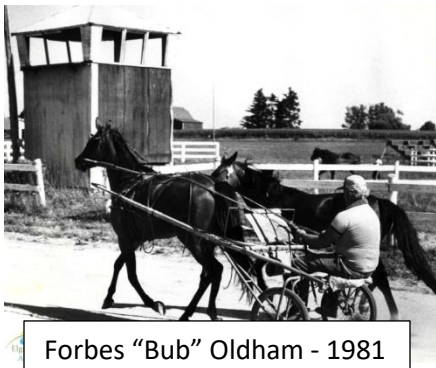
Long-time Shedden resident, Keith Orchard, recalled that the Corral building was brought to the site as a barn. It was split vertically and the half sections separated to form the west and east sides of the new structure. The centre was filled in and all three sections tied together. Years later, concrete blocks were set in place to form the front entrance and provide space for a kitchen and washrooms.

Southwold residents are both frugal and talented to make the most practical use of their resources!



Popular horse breeder and racer Ken Bogart was one of the more prominent personalities on the Shedden Fair race program.

Mr. Bogart passed away early in 1981; his memory was honoured with a special race in his name at Shedden Fair later in the year.



Pari-mutual wagering was introduced to Shedden Fair for two years in the early 1980s. However, fair organizers had the added cost of pre-printed tickets but there wasn't a large enough following to sustain the racing program with the extra expense.

Following the destruction by fire of two horse barns, the racing program was discontinued by the late 1980s.

Miscellaneous Displays

Displays of farm machinery, automobiles, household electrical equipment and other modern innovations became regular features of the fair throughout the post war period. Antique farm machinery draws keen interest from Shedden Fair patrons but a team of horses is still popular!



Photos: Courtesy of the Spicer Family (Circa 2001)

Horse racing wasn't the only popular equestrian event at Shedden Fair. In 2001, photographer Lorne Spicer's camera caught "Show Jumping" activities on the race track. In the background, the legendary Women's Institute "Dining Hall" is evident!



Nervous contestants stood by, eagerly awaiting the chance to showcase their horsemanship on a test of agility and accuracy.

Photos: Courtesy of the Spicer Family (Circa 2001)

Kids Events

For the children, the opportunity to ride a pony has always been a favourite activity at Shedden Fair.



Photo: Courtesy of the Spicer Family (Circa 2001)



Off To The Fair

Aaron Beecroft, 6, and his two-year-old sister Karyn headed to the Shedden Fair with their wagon full of vegetables and wound up with second place in the chariot division of the Children's Parade.

(Circa 1981)



Shedden fairgrounds were a hive of activity with midway rides, food and game booths being set up. Some local youngsters were also on hand to make sure everything was being done right. Jason (front) and Steven Palmer of Shedden tried out the merry-go-round horses and found everything to be ship-shape in that area. (Circa 1980)

Nothing To It

Look who won a prize at the Shedden Fair. Greg, 7 and his sister, Charmaine, 11, proudly display a stuffed animal they won at one of the numerous games booths. They are the children of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Harris, of St. Thomas. (Circa 1977)

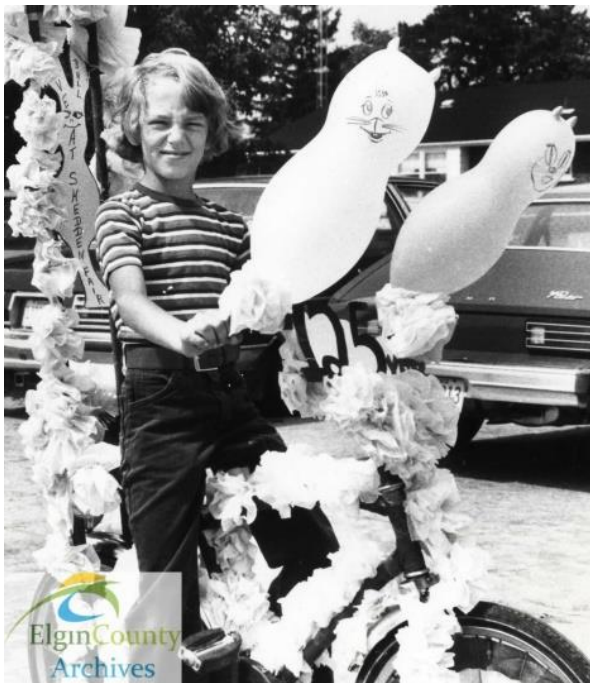


Miniature train rides were a Kids attraction in the mid-2000s.

Photo: Courtesy of the Spicer Family

Face painting is a fun tradition for the kids at Shedden Fair. This little fellow is a big fan of Spiderman and sits patiently while the artist transforms his image!

Photo: Courtesy of Karen Collard



Bike Winner-

Winner of the best decorated bike at the Shedden Fair 1979 was nine-year-old Geoff Carder, of Shedden. He said he just put as much 'stuff' on his bike as possible. Geoff was a veteran at bicycle decorating, having won the top award before.



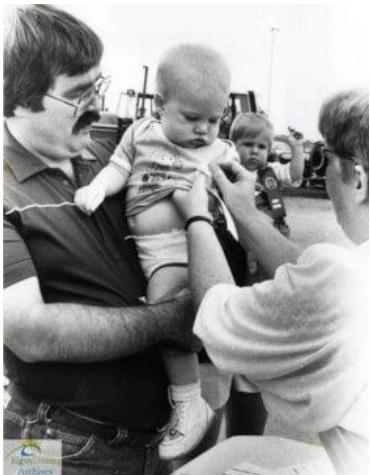
There are plenty of great activities for kids at Shedden Fair!

Baby Shows

One of Shedden Fair's most popular attractions is the Baby Show!

What's It All About? 'What's it all about anyway', Andrew Plain 14 months, appears to be saying to his cousin, Wesley Collard, right, at the Shedden Fair Baby Contest.

(August 25, 1980)



Me and My Dad

Mark Burgess, 11 months, was unsure of the significance of the ribbon pinned on him by Doreen Carder, an official at the Shedden Fair baby contest. However, dad Tony Burgess, of St. Thomas, was pleased even though he admitted to feeling 'a bit out of place' among all the mothers. (Circa 1981)



Myrna and Werner Stoss struck gold twice when their son Craig (*left*) copped the 1st Prize (9 – 12 months) in 1983 and daughter Laura (*right*) won the top honours (newborn to 4 months) in 1984! (Photos: Courtesy of Myrna Stoss)



Livestock



These Charlais Cattle were an attraction at Shedden Fair in 1994.



Trainers groom their miniature horses for competition in 1995.

Photos: Courtesy of the Spicer Family



Hold on Tight- Paul Sutton, 13, of Dutton appears to be holding on for dear life as he rounds the barrel on his horse Fury during Junior A cloverleaf riding competitions at the 124th annual Shedden Fair in 1978.





Cattle Shows have always been a traditional favourite at Shedden Fair. In the 1940s and 1950s, area Cattle Clubs and 4 H competitions were firmly established in Southwold.

The legacies of legendary Southwold cattlemen Stewart C. Brown and Robert Shore still resonate with the modern Shedden Fair.

Wes Stafford takes a keen look at animals at the 2018 Shedden Fair competitions.



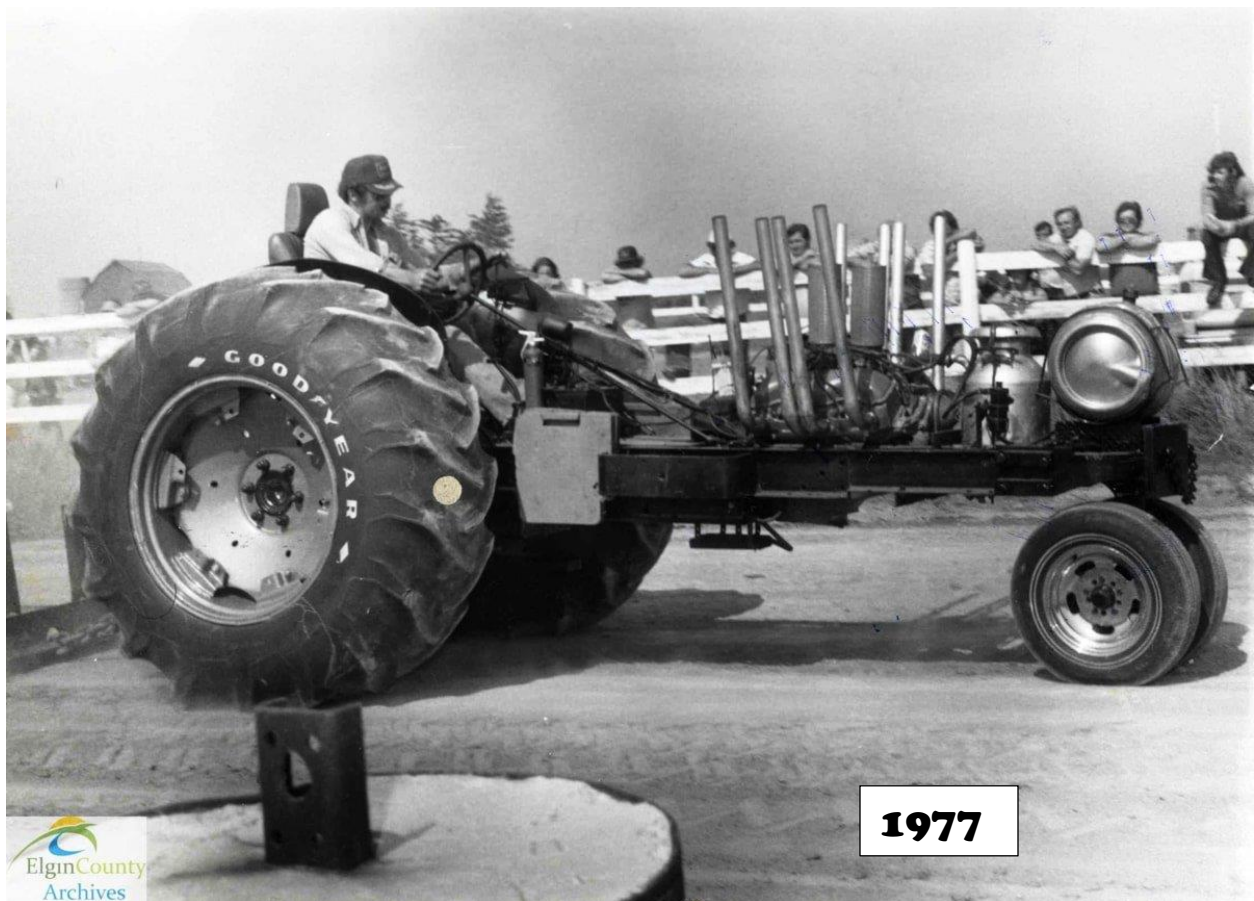
Crawford Farms won Grand and Reserve Champion females at the 2018 Shedden Fair!!

Tractor Pulls and Demolition Derbies

Shedden Fair held their first Tractor Pull in 1973. Veteran fair organizers credit Wayne Whalls as a key figure in the success of the early pulls.

Shirley Longhurst explains, “No matter what problems were happening with the organization of the competitions, when Wayne and his boys showed up there was a sense of calm... Wayne’s here!”

By the early 1990s, the popularity of the tractor pull became so great, it outgrew the Shedden Fair and began to operate as a major attraction on its own merit. Today, The Shedden Tractor Pull draws 6,000 viewers each June.





Pint-Sized Entry- A novelty tractor-pull classification involving miniature tractors pulling a small sled weighted with Currie Silcox of Shedden and an increasing number of concrete blocks, preceded the main events in the tractor pull. Stu Link, the judge for the pull, runs beside Richard Smibert, who made a full pull of 200 feet. (Circa 1976)



Novelty mini tractor pulls and Demolition Derbies are exciting attractions at modern Shedden Fairs.

Shedden Fair Queen

The Fair Board crowned the first Shedden Fair Queen in 1971 and Becky Smith, 14, of RR 4, Iona Station, received the honour. The contestants enter various articles in a special section of the fair competition and the queen is selected on the total number of points that she is awarded. The articles range from baked goods to clothing, and pillows. Miss Smith is seen here looking at the 'Sew to Save' display.



Over the years, a bevy of Southwold young women earned the distinction as Queen of Shedden Fair.



Mary Vandenbroek - 1973



Sandy Walker - 1975



Chris Rapelje - 1978



Fair Queen Chosen- Miss Rosemary Braam, 18-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Braam of RR 1, Southwold, was chosen Queen of the 1972 Shedden Fair.

Pictured, left to right, are Jean Luyks, third runner-up in the contest; Sandra Simpson, second runner-up; Miss Braam; Anita Verboven, Teen Queen, by virtue of most points in home making judging, and Christine Debeck, first runner-up in the Queen competition.

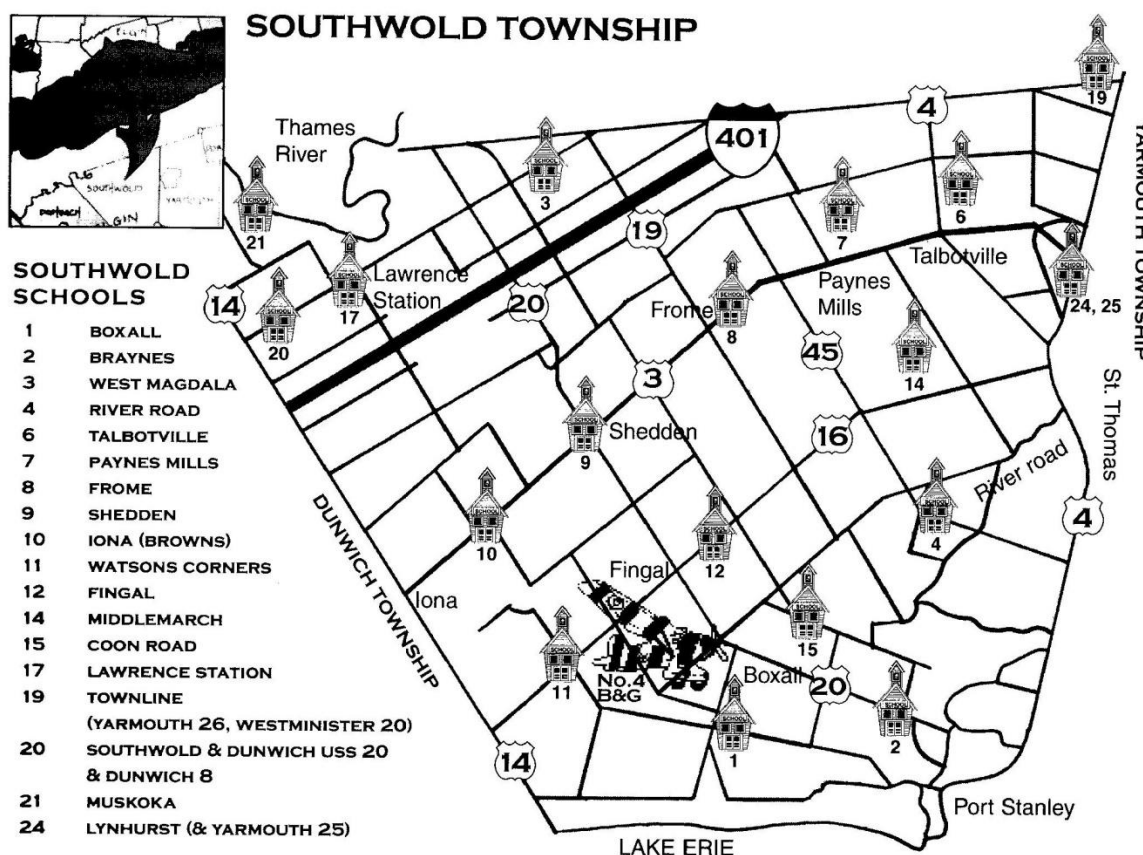
Homemaking Queen- Marilyn Carroll, president of the ladies division of the Shedden Fair, crowns Nancy McCallum the 1979 Shedden Fair Homemaking Teen Queen. To Nancy's left is last year's winner, JoAnne Chamberlain.

The selection of a Fair Queen transitioned with the times and when young men applied to enter the completion, the winning contestant became known as Shedden Fair Ambassador.



With changing times and social values, the event is no longer held.

School Fairs



In Ontario, school fairs were annual events, particularly prominent in rural areas from the 19th to the mid-20th century, where students showcased projects related to agriculture and other subjects. These fairs served as educational opportunities, allowing students to compete and learn through exhibits and activities.

It is unknown when the first School Fair occurred in Southwold.

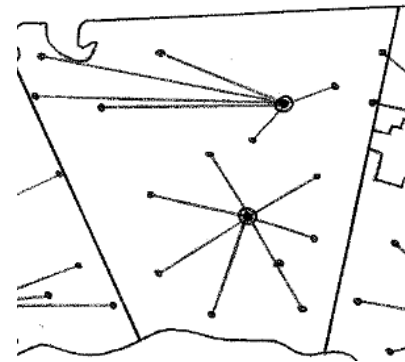
However, in a 1930 Agricultural Analysis of Elgin County, the authors made two observations relative to the importance of Schools Fairs early in the 20th Century,

“This is probably the largest and most active organization embracing practically all the rural schools in the County. School Fairs of course are purely educational and are serving the purpose for which they were intended.”

In the early 1930s, two Southwold regions hosted the School Fairs. Payne’s Mills and Fingal split the north and south of the Township.

Payne’s Mills hosted: Talbotville, Frome, West Magdala (McBride’s), Lawrence Station, Southwold and Dunwich, Muskoka.

Fingal hosted: Shedden, Iona (Brown’s), Watson’s Corners, Boxall, Coon Road, River Road, Middlemarch and Brayne’s,



Dora’s School Fair Story

Students attending Lawrence Station School, S.S. #17 in 1934 participated in School Fairs.

Dora Chamberlain grew up putting her school lessons to good use. Her legacy as a local historian is evident in Women’s Institute curation of



1934—Back Row (L-R): Laurence McIntyre, Arthur Oldham, Doris Campbell, Effie Mae Oldham, Clayton Chamberlain, John McNaughton; Middle Row: Dora Chamberlain, Evelyn Oldham, Reg Firby, Betty Campbell, Billy Gardiner, Wilbur Oldham; Front Row: Ilene Oldham, Murray Chamberlain, Carl Chamberlain, Donald Firby, Wray Oldham, Teacher Miss Esther I. MacLean.

Tweedsmuir histories of her community. The Elgin Heritage Archives has many documents preserved under the keen eye of Dora McArthur.

In 1997, Dora included her personal memories of the experience at the Payne's Mills School Fair she attended in the early 1930s.



SCHOOL FAIRS

School Fairs are a thing of the past, but school exhibits are still very much a part of Shedden Fair.

Filed in the Tweedsmuir History is a copy of a Rural School Fair list for Elgin County 1939. Southwold Township School Fair was held in Shedden at the Shedden Fair Grounds which was then situated at the end of Francis Street on the West Side of the Street and next to the Railroad.

In the early 1930's Payne's Mills was the site of the Fair, and it was an eventful day that remains in one's memory. In the spring, packets of seeds arrived at the school and the pupils made the choice of one packet of seeds for a flower and vegetable. These were to be planted in the family garden, tended during the growing season and the results shown at the fair.

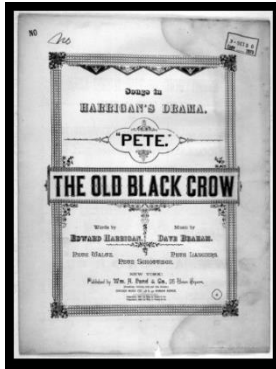


We went in the morning to place our exhibits and at noon we were served lunch by the Payne's Mill Women's Institute (I presume). This was in the old Hall which has long since disappeared because it sat beside # 3 Highway, with little distance separating them.



Payne's Mills Women's Institute Hall (circa 1950)

I remember the lunch as consisting of a salad plate decorated with parsley, and I venture to say that very few children now would even think of eating it but in our generation you ate what was set before you and most kids would eat anything.



After lunch was a program consisting of music & probably speaking contests. I remember vividly standing on that high platform at the front of the hall and singing a solo, unaccompanied, entitled "The Old Black Crow". Duncan Turner, Beth Vicary's father was the judge and I know I didn't win anything and I don't remember what the judge's remarks were. The only practice I had was picking out the tune on the piano at school and... then singing it to myself while walking home from school.

After the Fair moved to Shedden Fair Grounds, our entire school prepared Choral numbers such as "Do ya ken John Peel at the break of Day" etc. We stood on a wagon to perform these miracles.

We also demonstrated a game. I forget what it was called, but a bright bandana was placed on a piece of wood in the centre and two sides of players were in a line some distance from the target. I think we must have had numbers, and when your number was called, you ran to the centre to retrieve the bandana and run back to your place. - Maybe it was called Run, Sheep Run. My number was called and at that time I was one of the "Little Kids" and my opponent happened to be one of the "Big Boys". Away I went and even with my short legs I got the Target and I can remember the onlookers laughing.

I don't remember when the School Fairs became a thing of the past and were amalgamated with the local fairs, but I know when I go the Fair now I don't have to sing!!!

Dora McArthur



The Competitor

While Dora Chamberlain was experiencing her singing debut at the School Fair in Payne's Mills, another young Southwold boy was busy working on the family farm and preparing his own School Fair entries.



MARK BROWN

Mark Brown was born and raised on the family farm nestled just north of Frome. From an early age, he pitched in with daily chores and quickly proved himself to be a natural with horses, earning a reputation as a skilled and intuitive handler. His talents didn't stop there—Mark possessed a “Golden Touch” when it came to caring for livestock, tending to crops and mastering the many practical skills that keep a farm running smoothly.

Reverend John Brown shared some memories of his father's competitive accomplishments at Southwold's School Fairs, Shedden Fairs and other rural fairs.

“I have a display case from my dad that he had compiled and it was shown at Shedden Fair years ago. I inherited the case and it was in the Shedden library during last year's fair. I have been asked to bring it to the Shedden Library for the 2025 fair.



Rev. John Brown

The case has the title ‘**Awards won by Mark Brown - Horse Section - over 52 years - 1927-1979**’. Within the case are samples of prizes that

he won over the years. Dad was born in 1914 so that means that he began participating at the fair when he was 13 years old.

He has rural School Fair Tickets for Beef Calf, Poultry, Beets and Splice of Rope. Ribbons marked as Ontario School Fair or Elgin Ribbons 4 Colt Club ribbons and 17 ribbons have the name of the horse or horses written on the cardboard Prize ticket, and perhaps the particular class in which he showed the horses.



He also showed horses at Delaware, Glencoe, Westminster and Wallacetown Fall Fairs.

I have a total of 117 ribbons or cardboard prize tickets. A number are from the other fairs, but there are about 100 tickets from Shedden Fair!"



Shedden Fair - School Participation

A beloved Southwold school tradition from the end of World War II until the mid-1960s was student participation in Shedden Fair competitions. Countless classroom hours were dedicated to refining handwriting and printing skills, crafting imaginative works of art, composing poetry and short stories, and honing marketing abilities through Safety Awareness Posters.

Teachers at Southwold schools took an active role in guiding classes through the rules and regulations prescribed by the Fair guidelines. Teachers often served as mentors and cheerleaders in urging students to present their best work.

(right) In September 1976, Mrs. Sharon O'Neil, a teacher at Southwold-Lynhurst School was faced with the predicament while helping to prepare the school exhibit of art for the Shedden Fair.



School Vegetables-

This display of vegetables is the result of the efforts of S.S. 3 Southwold school children and was one of the finest arrangements on exhibit. In the picture Mrs. John McNaughton, is shown making final adjustments." (Circa 1959)



Safety Poster Winners- The winners of the Elgin County Women's Institute Rally safety poster contest were officially announced in November 1979. The nominees were the winners at the four fairs held this fall in the county- Shedden, Wallacetown, Rodney, and Aylmer. The winners are, sitting, from left: Colleen Riley, first place in kindergarten competition, Rodney Fair; **Steven Van Dyke, second place Kindergarten, Shedden Fair; Paul Chamberlain, first place Grades 1 and 2, Shedden Fair.** Standing from left: **Brad Jackson, second place Grades 5 and 6,**

Shedden Fair; Jennifer Walters, second place Grades 1 and 2, Rodney Fair; Saria Reynolds, second place Grades 3 and 4, Rodney Fair; **Tammy McKillop, first place Grades 3 and 4, Shedden Fair.** Absent from photo is Nick Wilkinson, first place, Grades 5 and 6, Rodney Fair. (1979)



Vegetables Display-

In the Public school division of vegetable displays 12 varied and interesting displays were entered. Pictured here with two of the prize winning displays are Mrs. Harold Rycroft, fair director, and admiring one of the large green peppers is Marg McCart, one of the spectators.

(Circa 1972)

Annie Isobel (McCallum) Tait taught at SS# 7, Paynes Mills for 10 years. This was a one room school with students in Grades 1 to Grade 8. A teacher needed to have her wits about her and possess extreme patience with the range of abilities under her charge. Who better to record the Shedden Fair experience from the unique perspective of a teacher?



S.S. #7 Paynes Mills School 1965

Teacher Mrs. Annie Isobel McCallum Tait, can be seen standing at the back right.

“In June, classes were finishing the recommended curriculum and priorities included playing baseball; and exams! It was a very busy time.

We always tried to take the time to do fair work as the fair was important to the community. We would do art projects, printing, writing and crafts. Some projects took a lot of time to complete. Often a second attempt had to be made. With all eight grades there were various topics

to enter. Also, with the end of school coming a few pieces were not completed on time.

Usually, we created quite a mess in the classroom. Some things took extra time to dry, paintings, papier Mache, glued pieces and paper cutting articles. Lots of space too was required in the classroom. Most pupils seemed happy to do something different. The most joy for the child was to see a prize on their article when they attended the Shedden Fair. They knew that some money would be coming to them!

The teacher had to collect all of the entries, names had to be written on the fair entry tags and then deliver to someone on the fair board on the last day of school. Next, someone had to judge the articles and take them to the fairgrounds.

It all took extra time, but it all was extra learning for all ages in the one room school.”

Former Payne’s Mills Teachers



This group of former Payne’s Mills teachers would have experienced many Shedden Fair preparations!

(Left to right): Margaret McAlpine Campbell, Annie Isobel McCallum Tait, Margaret Annett Fife, Mrs. Jack Satchell, Mrs. Fred Helkaa, Margaret Annett McIntosh, Margaret McIntyre Turner, Barbara McCallum, May Breen Beaudoin, and Elizabeth Graham Malott (Circa 1969)

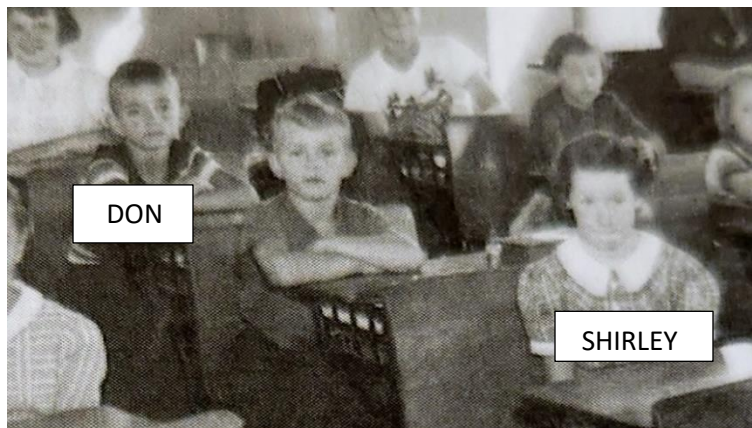
The tradition of all Southwold students participating in Shedden Fair began to diminish after the smaller individual School Sections ended in 1968.

Over the ensuing years, individual senior teachers at the new centralized Southwold School continued the tradition with their individual classes. Some of these teachers included: Melba Marr, Doris McNaughton, Alice Plain, Sharon O'Neil and Margaret Carrol. Each had a deep affection for Shedden Fair!

Today's Shedden Fair offers competitive events under the broader category of Youth Entries.

Parades

1952 saw the first colourful dress parade of the Township's school children. About ninety-five percent of the schools took part and prizes were awarded to all schools participating.



Two students attending Lawrence Station S.S. #17 in the 1950s were classmates, Donald Miller and Shirley Leitch. The two now long serving members of the Shedden Fair Board remember some difficult

incidents which happened when they were preparing their presentations for the School Parades.

“We had an awful (*phonographic*) record that we marched to when we practiced in our classroom for the parade!” Shirley lamented when discussing the experience.

“One year we had a ‘Scottish’ theme for our parade. Our teacher, Althea Campbell went out and bought plaid wall paper which we all had to cut up and wear as kilts. The boys had to roll up their pant legs to wear their ‘kilts’. The boys hated that!”

Donald concurred with Shirley’s assessment of the incident. “The wall paper would rip!”

Another year meant a new set of problems to solve for the parade theme. Shirley continued with the memory, “One year we were Indians.”

Donald was quick to point out that at that time, “... the word Indigenous hadn’t been heard yet.”

“At home we had chickens,” Shirley proceeded, “so... we had to save the feathers when we knew this (parade) was coming up so all the kids could have these feathers for their costumes.”

Don picked up the story, “They picked up burlap feed bags that were cut up for our outfits.”

Shirley remembers that, “All schools had to be in this parade, in Southwold.”

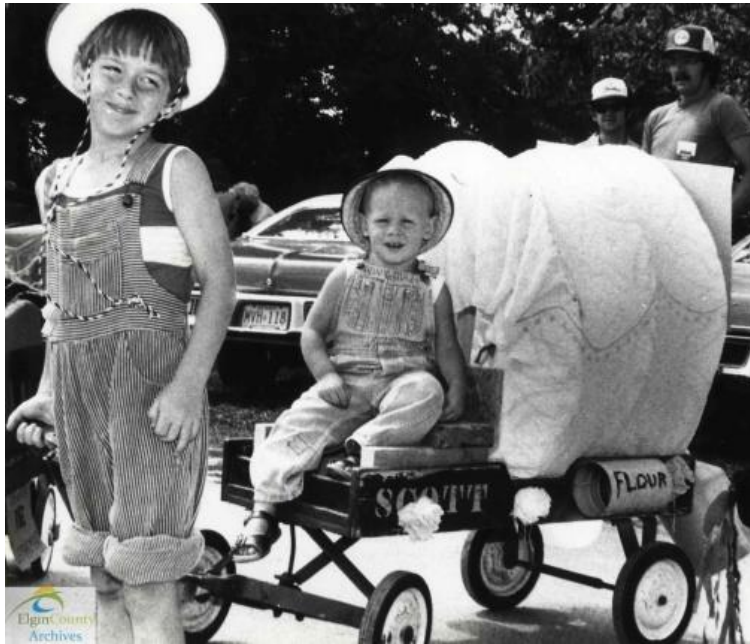
School Parades at Shedden Fair continued through the 1950s and 1960s and then ended as a school event when the small school sections amalgamated into the Southwold Central School.

However, youth parades have continued over the



Sher Palmer, age 6, of
Talbotville. (1980)

years as a regular event of Shedden Fair. Children prepare their costumes as family events to join in the fun!



Five-year-old Scott Orchard pulls brother Steven, 2, during the Shedden Fair parade on August 25, 1980.

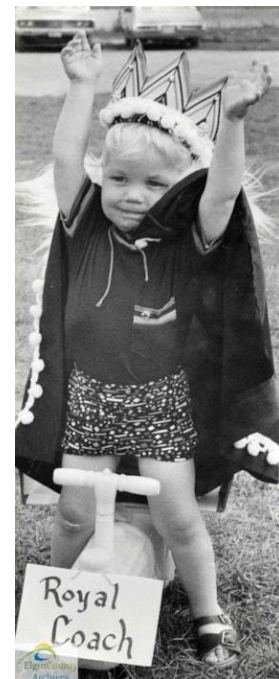
The two Fingal residents loaded up their wagon and headed west, actually north, to Shedden. Attached to the back of the wagon was a sign reading 'Shedden Fair or Bust'.



(Left) **"Shedden Star Trekkers?"** Margie Hutchings, 7, below and Jeanette Jameson, 11, brought the current craze for science fiction to the Shedden Fair parade.

(Right) **"The One And Only"** Two-year-old Mark Jenner, son of Mr. and Mrs. Larry Jenner of RR 2, Port Stanley, as 'King Mark,' was one of several dozen youngsters in the parade at the 124th annual Shedden Fair.

(Circa 1980)



The keen photographic eye of Lorne Spicer captured these colour images of past Shedden Fair Parades.





Kelly Palmer (*left*) of Shedden appeared in the Shedden Fair Parade dressed as “Simple Simon – The Pie Man”. Delicately carrying her pies, little Kelly looks like she might be wearing a red apron from the Red & White Store in Shedden!

(Circa 1985)



This group of Miniature Horses joined the Shedden Fair Parade in the late 1980s.



Three pretty drum majorettes, Marion Maw, Sheila Woodman and Elaine Fulton, Fingal, led their school in the parade of Southwold Township schools at Shedden Fair in September, 1952.



Shedden Fair Parade in 1979 included these children riding their colourfully decorated bikes and trikes!

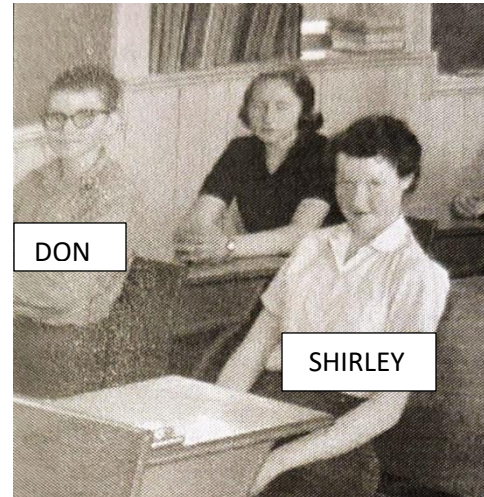
In the background is the iconic announcer's tower at the Shedden Fairgrounds. The tower presided over a multitude of racing and various other events.

(Photo: Courtesy of Myrna Stoss)

Stalwarts of Shedden Fair

When it comes to knowing any detail about Shedden Fair, the go-to authorities have to be two long serving members of the Shedden Fair Board. Shirley Longhurst and Donald Miller have worked together on Shedden Fair for almost fifty years.

Once classmates at the one room Lawrence Station S.S. # 17 School, Shirley and Donald participated in school parades and individual projects for the annual fair, as children. As they grew older, they participated in Shedden Fair through local youth clubs.



One early memory of attending Shedden Fair stands out in Don Miller's mind. "The Fair was drowned out... or washed out, about 1961." This curtailed all the events including the scheduled racing program.

However there was one program that wouldn't be cancelled. "They still held their 4H Achievement Day. I was still in 4H in those days and the 4H calves went into the Horse Barn. We couldn't get out in the laneway enough to show the calves (because of the rain) and so we went into the Horse Barn."

Don recalled one other year that inclement weather reduced elements of Shedden Fair. "It wasn't a total wash out but a lot of the activities were cancelled."

Shirley added, "It just poured! I think there was about four inches of water on the track!"

Don continued the story, “The Tractor Pull was on and they finished it. Talbotville Transport pulled in the laneway coming back from the C.N.E. with Monteith’s cattle that were going to be in the Cattle Barns all night. They just pulled in the gateway and the clouds opened up. Nobody could get out. I said, ‘that truck’s got to move...’ and, I don’t know who the kid was, I never did know, but somehow I had an extra flashlight with me and he and I, in this pouring rain storm, would keep hitting the top of the transport’s mirrors with our flashlights and he would keep coming back. I was soaked to the skin and he was too! While coming back home that night, the ditch along Union Road was full of water. We got that much water that fast... within an hour. We probably got four inches of water within an hour.”

Other than the two torrential rains that shut down Shedden Fair, the only other cancellations in Don’s and Shirley’s time with the board were due to the COVID 19 Pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

Donald became President of the Shedden Fair Board in 1976. That same year, Shirley took on the role as Secretary for the Board. They have worked together for the common good of Shedden Fair ever since!



Adapting Through the Years: The Evolution of the Shedden Fair

Change is inevitable, and the Shedden Fair has embraced it with grace and tradition. In its early days, the fair was held on Wednesdays in September, timed to celebrate the bounty of the fall harvest. Over time, the event grew—expanding first to a two-day format, then shifting to weekend festivities to better welcome the community.

In the late 1950s, Southwold and Dunwich went their separate ways. The Southwold Agricultural Society transitioned to Shedden Agricultural Society in 1966.

By the mid-1970s, Shedden Fair had moved to August. Today, Shedden Fair continues to honour its agricultural roots while reflecting modern rhythms. It is now held on the fourth weekend of August, offering something for everyone in a lively and welcoming atmosphere.

By the mid-1990s, the Southwold community had recognized the need for a new gathering space. The aging “Country Club” was outdated, and many fairground buildings were in disrepair or required replacement. In response, the Shedden Fair Board made the pivotal decision to transfer ownership of the property to the Township.

In March 1998, the Southwold Keystone Complex officially opened, marking a new chapter in the Shedden Fair's storied history.

Today's Shedden Fairgrounds bear little resemblance to the layout of the 1954 Centennial Fair. The Women's Institute “Dining Hall” is gone, replaced by a new pavilion erected on the former “Corral / Country Club” site. This modern facility now hosts cozy community breakfasts.

The Keystone Complex boasts a fully modern kitchen that adheres to current health regulations, and its spacious hall provides ample seating for community meals and gatherings.



The original livestock buildings have long since been removed, replaced by a more recently constructed barn that now serves as the livestock facility.

Swine competitions were discontinued in the 1990s when it became clear that the animals could not withstand the summer heat—a poignant reminder of how climate change affects even traditional rural events.

Large, easily installed tents have become the preferred solution, eliminating the need for costly permanent structures. The Announcer's Tower has also been retired, with portable public address systems now used as needed.

The former race track has been partially repurposed into a scenic walking trail winding through Keystone Park near Talbot Line. A portion of the original track on the west side still serves a vital role each June, hosting the popular Shedden Tractor Pull event. The Shedden Fair Demolition Derby uses the partial track in August.

Permanent bleachers from 1954 are a thing of the past. Portable bleachers, constructed for versatility, are now used as required throughout the year. For the Shedden Tractor Pull, the organizing committee brings in massive portable seating to accommodate the event's impressive crowds.

It's incredible how a tradition that started in 1854 has continued to bring people together for over 170 years. The fair is a true testament to the enduring spirit of rural Ontario, blending agricultural heritage with modern-day fun. It's a celebration that keeps evolving while staying rooted in its origins. These events showcase the community's agricultural heritage and bring people together for a weekend of fun and friendly competition.

A legion of volunteers, dedicated sponsors and an experienced group leading the Shedden Fair Board provide a bright future for this enduring institution... Shedden Fair.



The Shedden Fair Board in 2025 is in secure hands led by Shirley Longhurst (Secretary) and Stu Down (President). Absent for the photo is Cathy Koyle (Treasurer).

Reflecting back to the Shedden Fair Centennial in September 1954, the hope expressed by “Tommy” Thomas has been realized!

“Those fair grounds could and should be developed into a community centre for the entire district.”

Personal Memories:

Ken Howe



Ken Howe (*left*) was active in several beef cattle clubs during the late 1940s and early 1950s. His memories of the Shedden Fair are especially meaningful, as the fairgrounds on Francis Street later became the site of the home he built and has lived in since 1969.

One story that stands out in Ken’s memory involves his brother Keith entering a horse race at the fair with the Howe family’s “cream-coloured” pony. At nineteen years old, the pony was far from a racing thoroughbred—she was primarily used to herd cattle on their farm just east of Lawrence Station and was often ridden by their father, Thompson.

When Keith saddled up the aging pony, it drew laughter from the other competitors, all mounted on well-trained racehorses. But to everyone's surprise, especially the spectators pressed against the fence line, the wily old mare charged ahead, leading the race for a quarter mile. Though she ultimately finished fourth out of five, her spirited performance left a lasting impression on all who witnessed it.



Keith Howe

The second memory is less humorous, yet it offers a poignant reflection of life in Southwold during that era.

In 1948, Shedden Fire Chief Charles Mabey and the Shedden Volunteer Fire Department proudly showcased their brand-new firetruck at the Shedden Fair. Fairgoers gathered around the gleaming vehicle, marveling at the latest advancement in firefighting technology. But amid

the clamor of the midway, the thunder of horse races, and the hum of excitement, the wail of a fire siren went unnoticed.

While the community celebrated progress, an unfortunate incident was quietly unfolding just north of Shedden—where a barn belonging to the Carder family had caught fire. By the time the alarm was realized, it was too late to save the structure.

Ross Burgar

Growing up in Fingal during the 1950s and 1960s, Ross Burgar holds a fond memory of attending his very first Shedden Fair alongside his grandfather, Lee Burgar, also a resident of Fingal.



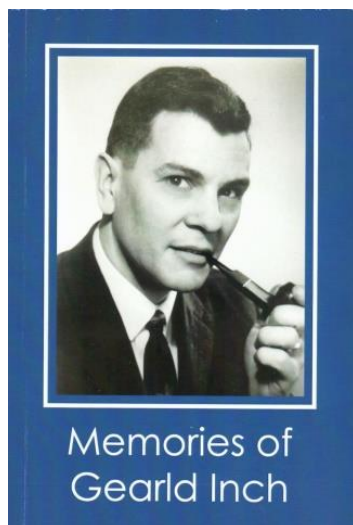
“I must’ve been five or six years old,” Ross recalls. “When we arrived at the fair, Grampa found a group of his friends—older fellows in fedora hats, as I remember, and all very confident in their knowledge of horsemanship. They gathered at the sidelines of the racetrack, lit cigars, and made personal wagers against each other. Pretty boring stuff for a little kid!”

But the energy changed as the horses thundered into the home stretch. “Suddenly, everything came alive—the shouting, the cheering, the old-timers yelling for their favorite drivers and groaning when another horse pulled ahead at the last second.



Imagine...all that noise and excitement, just over a one-dollar wager!”

Gearld Inch



In his autobiography, Gearld Inch recalled a milestone event that his father Roy Inch influenced at the Shedden Fair Centennial in 1954.

“In 1954, Dad was the president of the Shedden Agricultural Society. That year also happened to be

the 100th Anniversary of the Shedden Fair. In order to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the fair, the Minister of Agriculture of Ontario wanted to build a cairn with a plaque on it, at the Shedden Fair Grounds.



Roy Inch



However, Dad wanted no part of that. Dad felt that this did not serve a functional purpose and could not understand why anyone would want to commemorate such an occasion in this way. Instead, Dad proposed to put up new steel gates and a steel archway between two stone pillars at the entrance

of the Shedden Fair Grounds. The proposal was accepted and the Provincial Government paid for it. The entranceway's archway and gates included the metal lettering of "Southwold and Dunwich Agricultural Society".

On each of the stone pillars, a plaque was installed, one of which recognized Dad as President for that year.

Sometime later, a truck ran into the entranceway gates to the fairgrounds and badly damaged the gates.

The gates and archway were taken down for repairs but were never re-installed.

Years later, Mom approached the Shedden Agricultural Society asking where the gates were and why they had not been re-installed. Shortly after Mother's inquiry the gates were put back up between the original pillars and the archway was placed to the east of the main entrance over a small garden. They remain there to this day."



Rev. Diane (Auckland) Macpherson

My first thoughts are not about specific things that happened - other than showing 4H calves - but, rather what a 'big deal' it was and a highlight of the summer.

And that Ken and Doris Howe were married on Shedden Fair Day!! Think that's correct. Somehow I think I remember heading home from the fair (with the calves in the box on the back of the truck) and going by Frome church...although after over 50 years this maybe more a figment of my imagination!! (August 27 1966)



There are lots of 'basic' memories - horse races, a dignitary doing the official opening (my Dad as warden in 1967), the food booth by Bethany United, rides, waiting to cross the track between horse races, winning prize money for school (doubt that it was for art for me!), probably more creative writing, the 'tower' where they would call the races and an incredible sense of the Southwold Township community.



Official Opening- Shedden Fair 1967

(left to right): Ken Carmichael of St. Thomas, 1st vice-president of the Shedden Fair Board; Reeve of Southwold and Warden of Elgin County Albert Auckland; President of the Women's Division of the Fair Mrs. Claybourne Gordon; President of the Fair Board Milton Cole (standing in rear); and 2nd vice-president of the board Albert Orchard.

In front is Joanne Chamberlain, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Chamberlain of Southwold, who later presented a corsage to Mrs. Auckland. (Saturday August 26, 1967)



Keith Orchard



For long-time Shedden resident and cherished Southwold volunteer Keith Orchard, the Shedden Fair holds a special place in his heart. He fondly recalls its transition from the familiar charm of Francis Street to the spacious grounds of the new location at the east entrance to Shedden. One memory that lingers is the moving of a building from the old site to its new home on Highway # 3 (Talbot Road)—an act that, for Keith, symbolized the community’s spirit of tradition carried forward with care.

“They put *each* side of the barn on *two* connected wagons. Two tractors worked side-by-side, in tandem, hauling the barn over to the new site!”

Another moment that lingers in Keith’s heart is from September 1954, when his brother, Hugh Orchard, pitched in to spruce up the entrance to the new fairgrounds. “My older brother Hugh painted the fence at the entrance to the fairgrounds so it would be ready for the Shedden Fair Centennial in 1954. I remember Hugh racing home from school, getting rid of his books and changing his clothes to go and paint!”

A devoted community volunteer, Keith has played a quiet but vital role in the ongoing success of the Shedden Fair for many years.

One of the most familiar sights at the Keystone Complex is Keith aboard his yellow tractor, carefully mowing the grounds in preparation for the upcoming fair—a gesture that reflects his enduring pride in the place and the people it brings together.



Wendy (Silcox) Neil

My grandfather Clayton Silcox (*right*) was the parade clown for many years. We would decorate our bicycles, and they would clown around along the route with us. On occasion my grandfather would ask if we would like to be clowns. The year in question it was a family affair!



Just Clowning Around

Three clowns pose for a picture before the judging competitions for best-dressed clown. They are, from left, Wendy Silcox, 11, her eight-year-old cousin Jason, and Katie Johnson, 4. (Circa 1979)



I can't remember why we had so many clown costumes laying around, but it is possible my grandmother Maxine Silcox (*left*) had something to do with that. She was an amazing seamstress. I learned that my grandmother was the secretary treasurer for many years. She wanted to hold the position at least as long as her father, Duncan McCormick, held it. (**Editor's Note:** Maxine Silcox held the Shedden Fair Secretary's position for twelve years, retiring in March, 1976)

I always looked forward to the parade on Saturday, especially when I got to be a clown. I was a pretty introverted child around others, but this costume allowed me to be silly and have fun without judgements. The fair was a big deal in our family.

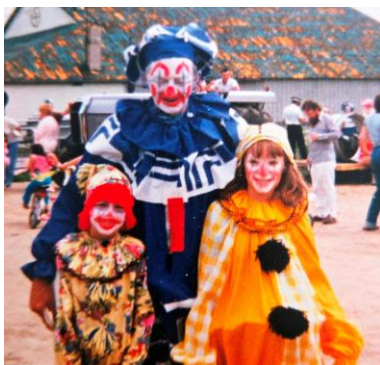


My Dad (Don) having some fun on the racetrack.



My Aunts Brenda and Connie, my grandmother Maxine and my Mom (Peggy) posed in front of a quilt made by my grandmother.

My mother designed the Shedden Agricultural Society logo sometime in the late seventies. My grandmother said they needed a logo, and my mother, Peggy Silcox, drew something as she is very artistic. Maxine approved it, gave her \$10 for her efforts, and it has been used ever since.



My grandmother encouraged us to have many entries in the kids' exhibits, and I can sew, bake and name many native plants because of her efforts. It was exciting to prepare for exhibits, (and get the prize money to spend at the fair!) and fun to play along the route with grandpa, who had a great sense of humour and liked to joke.



Marie (Burgar) Ostrander

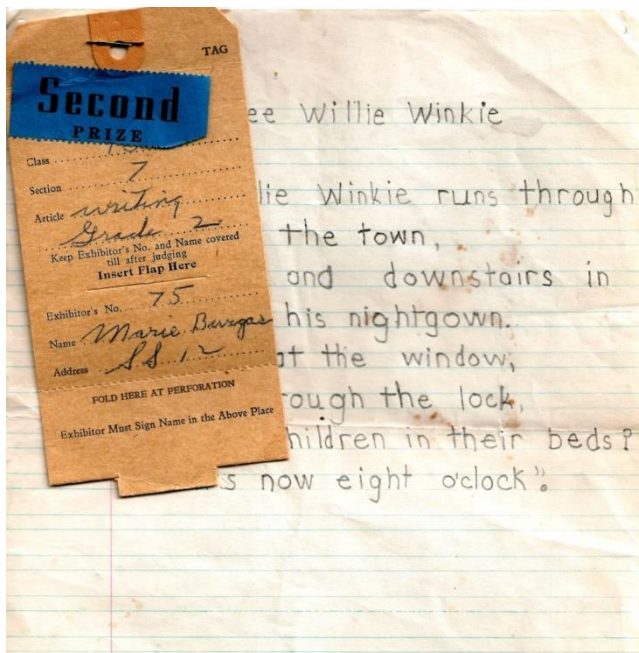


Like so many Southwold-raised children, seven-year-old Marie Burgar experienced the Shedden Fair as more than just an event—it was a rite of passage. Under the thoughtful guidance of teacher Miss Rhea Coulter, students diligently honed their printing and, later, writing skills, striving for the level of care and craftsmanship that would make their work worthy of display at 'The Fair.' For Marie and her classmates, those early lessons in patience and pride became treasured memories tied to the excitement of fair season.

Marie and her Grade Two classmates at S.S. #12 Fingal School leaned intently over their desks in 1953, clutching oversized school pencils as they meticulously worked on their Shedden Fair printing projects.



A 1953 class at S.S. No. 12, Southwold, included from front left, Donna Thorpe, Linda Cass, Martha Sells, Donna Burgess, Mary Sells, Barbara Cook, back row, Karen Lockhart, Marie Burgar, Noreen Crabe, Joanne Moore, Rosemary Lidster, Beverly Hogsden, Sandra Telfer, Joan Campbell. (Contributed)



Marie's hard work paid off and her handcrafted version of childhood classic, "Wee Willie Winkie," earned her a second prize finish in the category!



Tom Spicer



One of my favourite memories of Shedden Fair was the participation of Shedden Minor Hockey coaches riding the “Dunk Tank”.



My dad (Lorne) and Uncle John Spicer built the contraption in the mid-1960s. It became one of the primary fundraising activities of the minor hockey system from about 1965 – 1975. Most of the coaches came out and took dunks for their teams.



My personal favourite though was Bill Collard. One year, Bill showed up in a dress suit and he loudly announced that it was, in fact, the suit he wore on his wedding day! He further proclaimed that he could not believe the suit still fit!

Acting every bit the part of a carnival “barker”, Bill took his perch on the dunk tank “hot seat” loudly letting everyone know the significance of his special suit.

Probably every hockey player he ever coached lined up to take their shot at knocking Bill into the water.

Every “bag skate” drill, demotion to the third line, or playful whack on the shin pads Bill ever imposed came back to haunt him that day at Shedden Fair! The well-dressed coach rode the dunk tank for the next half hour and Shedden Minor Hockey was the beneficiary of his good humour.



*Front Row: Dennis Kilmer, Jim Stanley, Roger Crosby, Bob Carr, Tom Spicer, Gerald Rycroft, John Ooms, Albert Addley
Back Row: Bruce Stafford, David Moore, Len Palmer, Tim Collard, Harry Vandembrock, Larry Walker, John Cummings, George Moore, Hardy Collard, Paul Dean, Bill Collard*

Grant & Mary-Lou Jones

Mary-Lou:

Growing up in a small town, I was accustomed to the community involvement and closeness. Then, moving to Southwold and attending the Shedden Fairs continued the small town feeling and did not disappoint. Now, doing the fair entries with our grandchildren brings on new and different memories: making the crafts, gathering the flowers, or finding that longest bean from our garden!



The laughter, excitement and fun we share together while preparing the entries for judging brings different priceless memories of the Shedden Fair.

The granddaughters and I look forward every year to the rides, the animals and the new memories we share from Shedden Fair.

Thanks to all the hard work of the volunteers who make this possible every year!

Grant:

My fondest memories centre around the crops, food and cattle judging competitions. Even the Main Stage has some pretty good talent to watch and it's impressive.



Most of all, as a Councillor and Mayor (and Elgin County Warden) for the past twenty-two years, being involved with the opening ceremonies with the other politicians... it's the people!

Meeting new and visiting with people that I only saw at the fair is a fond memory.

Luella Monteith



As a woman who raised three children in Southwold, Luella Monteith cherishes the memories of her children preparing their school entries for Shedden Fair youth competitions.

“Ken Jr., Paul and Jannet each participated in the usual school efforts; printing, writing, compositions and art work when they attended Southwold School.”

However, it was the children’s grandfather, Norman Watson, (Luella’s father) who got the children serious about the white beans they were entering into a fair competition.

“My dad had a sieve for the children to use so their beans would conform to the size guidelines of the fair!”

Luella recalled that her mother, “loved to watch the horse races. She enjoyed trying to pick the winner and she bet 25 cents on the races!”

As for her own fair preferences, Luella enjoyed wandering through exhibits, seeing the animals, displays of crafts and art pieces. “Many pieces were quite beautiful!”

Of course, as the wife of a local politician, Luella has fond memories of attending Shedden Fair with her late husband, Ken Monteith. “Ken and I enjoyed going to the Shedden Fair. There were always a lot of people we knew at the fair!”



Valerie (Shore) Cron



For me, it was all about the 4-H dairy calf club achievement day. Gary Clinton was the leader in those days. Sadly, for me a memory that was often talked about, and eventually laughed at in the Shore family, was my first time in a showmanship class at the fair.

Dad took the day off from auctioneering at the Talbotville sales yards to watch me.

Now this was a serious affair. We dressed in all white, walked backwards, leading our calf in a manner that would make it look its best for the judge, and when the judge stopped to look at your calf you were to make it stand in a perfect manner, feet positioned just so, make sure the top of the back was straight, and turn its head towards the judge on whichever side the judge was at.

I was in the midway enjoying the rides when I heard the loud speaker blaring “Would Valerie Shore please bring her calf into the ring now!” I came running, grabbed my calf, sauntered into the ring, walking forwards and chewing gum. Needless to say, I did not place well in the competition.

Somehow no one ever talked about the fact that in the year following, I did win the class to atone for my poor showing the first year, and I actually looked forward to Shedden Fair and our achievement day every year thereafter.



Myrna (Smith) Stoss



My first memory of Shedden Fair was as a young kid and there had been a lot of rain. The fairgrounds were full of mud so the fair was basically in the “Old Corral!”

As a young teen, my brother (Dale) and I showed our calves at the fair’s 4H Dairy Club Achievement Day. My Dad (Murray) showed some of his Holstein dairy cows.

We were members of the Fair Board and helped where ever needed. Kids always helped, too.



Both (our children) Craig and Laura got First Prize in the Baby Shows, 1983 and 1984.



My Mom (Betty) helped Grace Blewett with the Flower Show at the fair for many years. Once Grace was unable to do this, I helped my Mom. I now look after the class on my own. Last year, my two grandkids helped me!

For many years, Dad entered his vegetables. Mom had her sewing and flowers and some baking. Werner (husband) and I still enter baking, handcrafts and, photos.



Our daughter Laura also brings entries from her home in Fergus. Our grandkids (ages 7 & 10) enter in the Youth Fair.



This has been a family thing for many years. Werner was President of the Shedden Fair Board for several years.

References:

We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing collaboration of the **Elgin Heritage Archives**, whose generous access to photographs and archival descriptions has been invaluable to the Southwold 175 project.

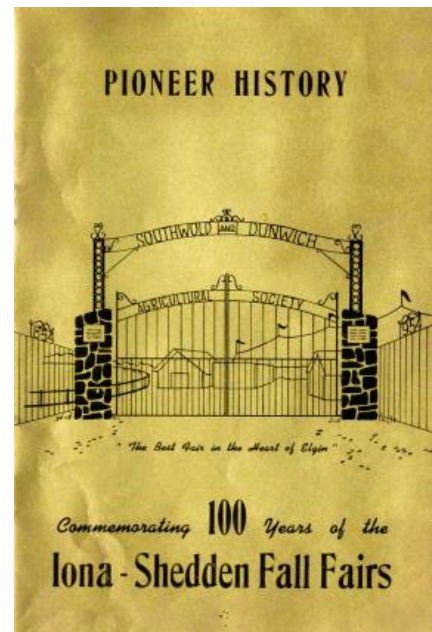
We remain profoundly inspired by the extraordinary insights found within the **Women's Institute Tweedsmuir Histories** of the Southwold community. The historical legacy captured by these dedicated women is truly immeasurable and continues to enrich our understanding of Southwold's past.

Personal anecdotes and photographs shared by the following individuals have offered vivid and meaningful reflections on the cherished tradition of the Shedden Fair:

Ken Howe, Ross Bugar, Gearld Inch, Rev. Diane Macpherson, Keith Orchard, Wendy Neil, Tom Spicer, Annie Isobel (McCallum) Tait, Marie Ostrander, Brenda Longhurst, Mayor Grant Jones, Mary-Lou Jones, Luella Monteith, Shirley Longhurst, Donald Miller, Valerie Cron, Rev. John Brown, Karen Collard, Myrna Stoss, Pat Palmer and Dora McArthur.

It is impossible to post this history of Shedden Fair without acknowledging the tremendous work by the 1954 Centennial Fair committee who produced the booklet, **Pioneer History Commemorating 100 Years of the Iona – Shedden Fall Fairs**

The diligence of the people who researched and wrote the story of the first 100 years of Shedden Fair is a testament to all who have worked to sustain the fair.



In summarizing their intentions, the 1954 organizers wrote:

“To them, and to all those who, in the intervening years, have carried on what they began one hundred years ago, we today give honour and credit, and have the satisfaction of knowing that the seed they planted, like the acorn has grown to be The Best Fair in the Heart of Elgin.”

We gratefully acknowledge the following resources for material used in this project.

A History of Lawrence Station, 1870-2009, Published by the Kensington Club of Lawrence Station (Shirley Longhurst, Alice Plain, Dora McArthur and Karen Plain)

Southwold Remembers... The War Years, Published by the Township of Southwold, (Pamela Walsh), 2002

Memories of Gearld Inch, by Gearld Inch, 2020

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