

The Story of Oro Fair

Excerpted from "The Story of Oro"

"It was as much a social as an agricultural event – the hall contained the products of the women's deft fingers stood near the gate. At one side was a long shed, devoted to the display of farm produce – a grandstand, formed by nature from a grassy knoll covered with sweet smelling pines, rose at one side and made a convenient and delightful resting place. Now it was thronged with people and resounding with a joyous bedlam of all the noises that all the farms in Oro joined together could produce"; thus wrote the famous Oro-born Canadian author Marion Keith, as she described the Oro township fair, then in the second half of its first century.

But such was not always the setting for Oro fair. . .

When Richard Drury, as president, and Joseph Thomas as secretary treasurer of the Oro Agricultural Society, led the first Oro fair in 1853, it was smaller and held at Rix's tavern on the NW corner Lot 15, Conc. 1, Oro on the Penetanguishene Road. The first list of members includes the names of Drury, Thomas, Partidge, Hickling, Raikes, Flaherty, Cliffard, Crawford and O'Brien; people who have played a prominent part in the development of Oro, many of whose descendants still live on the original homesteads.

For the first two or three years, they held a spring ploughing match and a regular fair in the fall, but the spring match was dropped and held either as a separate event or in conjunction with the county match in the fall. In 1855 the fair was held at White's Tavern in Dalston and while we do not know how many judges' refreshments netted Mr. White, 8 shillings, 9 pence and debited the society's books a like amount. The taverns must have had an attraction for the people, directors and judges alike, for it was held at three different taverns before settling at the township hall (now Old Town Hall, Line 7 N & 15/16 Sideroad) in 1869.