

AGRICULTURAL GATHERINGS: **Memories of Dundalk AND Milton FALL FAIRS**

Although most fall fairs have been cancelled this year, they remain the source of favourite memories. One year they are likely to return, perhaps better than ever. Since you probably can't get out to them this year in person, enjoy this tour of two fairs that took place last year.



Birds' view of
Milton Fall Fair
in 2019

The beauty of fall fairs in small towns is how they keep agricultural and rural traditions alive. The best fairs are simple and unpretentious. People want to see the pet show, the crafts demonstrations, the various beautiful, unusual, loud and smelly livestock.

There has to be a midway. Indeed, for many young people, the fair is only about the midway. For teens, it's especially in the evenings when the lights on the rides come on and everything looks a little dangerous.

For adults, there's something quaint and lovely about the exhibit halls full of prized vegetables, baking, pickles, quilts, photography, flower arrangements and more, some of them awarded with red, blue, white and yellow ribbons.

Then there's food: burgers, fries, hot dogs, cotton candy, candy apples, perhaps corn on the cob. Not usually the finest cuisine, the options are nevertheless fun and special, especially when bought from the window in the side of a gaily painted vehicle.

Dundalk Fall Fair

Last year was the 164th Dundalk Fall Fair. Held Sept. 6 to 8, its theme was "It's So Sweet". Dundalk is located on Grey Road 9 just southwest of Hwy. 10, halfway between Shelburne and Flesherton.

It featured the traditional elements of livestock shows, competitions, dog demonstrations, handmade or hand-grown exhibits, and the crowning of the senior and junior fair ambassadors. Serving as ambassador is a big deal.

Fair ambassador Rebecca Henderson shared that "In February I was one among many other ambassadors to spend the weekend at the OAAS [Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies]



◀ A young driver in the Dundalk tractor pull pushes the vehicle to its limit, with it going nowhere with front wheels off the earth. The heavy sled behind bears the triumphant name of "Humiliator."



▲ The Halton 4H rabbit hopping competition in Milton had young people gently guiding their bunnies over low obstacles.



▲ Starting young, this boy competed in the Dundalk pedal tractor pull, a mini version of the grownup challenge.



◀ A pygmy goat takes advantage of a sheep's soft and gentle nature in the Milton petting zoo.



▲ Milton's horse and pony competitions are beautiful displays of riding abilities.



▲ Dundalk takes food seriously. Stalks of corn with first, second and third prize ribbons. PHOTO BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT.

Convention and partake in activities that would help promote and express the importance of fairs in communities like Dundalk... I'm excited to see what the last few months as the 2018-2019 Fair Ambassador will bring me as I compete in the Miss Midwestern Ontario Competition and represent the Dundalk Agricultural society at the CNE in August."

Junior fair ambassador Chloe Watson remembered specific details from her busy year: "I met many members of our community and welcomed them to our fair. Then I handed out ribbons to the 4-H club, baby show, dolly show and chip off the old block. Rebecca and I were also entertained by the bouncy castles, truck and tractor pulls, as well as having front row seats to the derby. After an exhausting weekend we brought greetings to fairs within the area, and attended events

such as the Fall and Spring District 10 meeting, 4-H awards ceremony, Christmas parade and annual dinner."

Regular members of the public had even more to choose from. Last year the antique tractor pull was a good draw, with various brands of tractor giving various results. For those unsophisticated about tractors, it was amazing to see the range of performance in dragging a heavy sled whose weight increased with the distance pulled. Many tractors stopped only when the front wheels lifted high off the track.

Milton Fall Fair

For a town that has in recent years boomed in population and suburban development right up to the edge of the Niagara Escarpment, Milton had a surprising number of animals starring at the fair. Calves, cows, sheep, ponies, mini donkeys and alpacas filled the livestock display



▼ For many people the fair is a reason to indulge in fun food.

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▲ Milton's livestock display barn was immensely popular.

▼ An elegant lady drives a carriage horse in competition in Milton.



barn. Cuddly exotic animals like llamas, mini goats and relatives of rabbits displayed themselves near porcupine-like creatures and glamorous chickens. Some of these could be petted by children. Birds of prey were shown. Beef cattle, horses and ponies competed for prizes. There was even a rabbit hopping competition. You could watch a

blacksmith create a nail out of a lump of iron. Ladies from the Guelph Guild of Handweavers demonstrated spinning. There was a garden tractor pull competition. The crafts barn was full of impressive vegetables, needle work, antiques and floral decorations, some in the fair's theme "Pumpkins and Scarecrows." There were entertainment

performances on an outdoor stage although one dog who was supposed to do tricks just wasn't feeling it that day. No matter, its owner calmly led it off stage. Fair organizers are aware of the old charm of what they offer. In the 2019 booklet, they wrote "With roots reaching back to 1853, the concept of the Milton Fall Fair has

remained relatively unchanged despite massive changes in the community and society in general. The annual event has been held on the same 26-acre parcel of land off Robert Street since 1864, when the fair turned a profit of \$427." Milton is in the centre of Halton Region and is still run by Halton Agricultural Society. The fair booklet

▼ A treasure trove of quilts in the Dundalk exhibit hall. PHOTO BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT.



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traces the Victorian history, and mentions now-forgotten names, explaining "Fall Fairs had been held in the four townships of Esquesing, Nassagaweya, Trafalgar and Nelson, but there was a feeling a County Fair was needed to provide an opportunity to compete at a larger scale." Surely, part of the draw of a fall fair is its reliable sameness. You may know in general what you'll see when you go, although the specific details may differ. In a world of unknowns and uncertainty, the traditional fall fair can provide comforting fun. **NEV**

For news and information about future fairs, see dundalkfair.com and miltonfair.com

