



95 YEARS AND COUNTING...

HISTORY OF THE CLEVELAND COUNTY FAIR

It was in 1923 that the Shelby Kiwanis Club first began to dream of a county-wide fair.

They initiated a remarkable fundraising effort that raised \$15,000 (about \$200,000 in today's money) to establish the Cleveland County Fair, and the first ever fair was held that year, with approximately 70,000 people flocking to see.

The fair immediately established itself as the largest agricultural county fair in North Carolina, and continues to provide the excitement of rides and races, but also has continued the unwavering commitment to bringing the best agricultural practices to Cleveland County.

As Cleveland County Fair legend Dr. JS "Doc" Dorton stated at the very start...

"The purpose of the fair is to provide an opportunity for citizens to display the fruits of their labors, to meet and compare notes on crops, livestock, farm machinery, home development and improvement"

Doc Dorton was among the first officers of the fair, went on to become fair manager for 38 years (almost half of all the fairs) and the Cleveland County fair remains true to its heritage today.

The formula for a successful fair included the bringing together of farm and city life to showcase agriculture and industry with exhibits and education. Throughout the years, the ingredients have changed, but the formula for a successful fair remains the same.

	1923	Shelby Kiwanis Club formed the Cleveland County Fair committee with O. Max Gardner - President.
January 8th	1924	Dr. J.S. Dorton named Cleveland County Fair Manager.
October	1924	First Cleveland County Fair featuring Miller Shows on the Midway.
December	1951	Cleveland County Fair exhibit hall burns.
April 7th	1954	"Fat Lady" Betty Singleton Holdridge dies at the fair and is buried in Sunset cemetery.
May	1954	First rodeo at the Cleveland County Fair.
June 18th	1961	J. Sib Dorton, Jr. became second Cleveland County Fair manager.
July	1962	Elbridge J. Withers became third Cleveland County Fair manager.
August	1963	Log cabin brought to fairgrounds.
September	1971	Cleveland County Fair becomes ten day fair.
	1962	Waterwheel moved from Peeler's Mill in Casar to the Cleveland County Fair.
October	1973	Sam Goforth becomes the fourth Cleveland County Fair manager.
October	1974	Cleveland County Fair celebrates 50th Anniversary.
October	1976	Reithoffer Shows features midway entertainment.
October	1977	Joe Goforth becomes the fifth Cleveland County Fair manager.
October	1979	Six new ticket booths built at the main entrance.
	1987	New exhibit hall and performing arts stage built along with a new board room.
	1990	Horse show arena built.
October	1994	Largest attendance numbers recorded at 184,353.
	1994	Three buildings were named for previous fair managers.
		* Dorton Hall was named for Dr. J.S. Dorton and his son J. Sib Dorton
		* Weathers Arena was named for Elbridge J. Weathers
		* Goforth Building was named for Sam P. Goforth and Joe A. Goforth
	1994	Cemetery land acquired which allowed carnival expansion.

	1995	Midway was paved.
September 28th	1996	Wedding for Phillip Smith and Michelle Greene was held at the performing arts stage.
	1998	New grandstand was built and 7.7 acres of land was purchased on Kemper Road.
	1999	Roof added to grandstand.
January	2002	Cleveland County Fair wins Best Fair Award by the Association of Agricultural Fairs.
	2004	50 x 60 amphitheater was constructed adjacent to the Weather's Arena.
December	2004	Joe Goforth resigns after serving as fair manager for 28 years.
January	2005	Bill Edmondson was named the sixth Cleveland County Fair manager.
February	2007	Cleveland County Fair purchases the former Poston Trailer Park for additional parking.
February	2008	Fuchia Allen was named the seventh Cleveland County Fair manager.
December 12th	2008	Former fair manager Joe Goforth passed away at the age of 84.
April 1st	2010	Fuchia Allen resigns as manger of the Cleveland County Fair.
August 2nd	2010	Calvin Hastings is named the eighth Cleveland County Fair manager.
Dec 1 - 3	2010	First ever Christmas at the Fair
March	2011	Christmas Flea & Farmers Market Opened - Tuesdays
April 1st - 3rd	2011	First ever Spring Into the Fair Home and Garden Show event is held at the fairgrounds
August 11th	2011	American Legion World Series - Ronnie Dunn Concert
March 3rd & 4th	2012	First ever Cleveland County Bridal Fair.
April 21st	2012	Racing returns to the fairgrounds. (Legend Cars)
September	2012	The Cleveland County Fair becomes an 11 day fair.