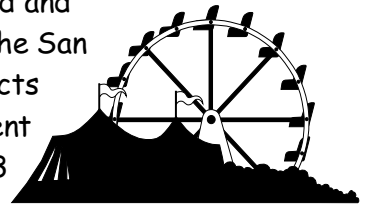


TEACHER RESOURCES

"THE BIG FRESNO FAIR HISTORY"

Over 100 years ago, in 1882, a group of prominent Fresnans took the lead and formed the Fresno Fairgrounds Association. Ranchers and growers of the San Joaquin Valley had long recognized the quality and variety of area products and livestock, and that recognition and pride resulted in the establishment of the Valley fair. One hundred acres were purchased in February, 1883 for \$5,000 from land developer Thomas E. Hughes, later known as the "Father of Fresno." Nearly every fall since 1884 the Central San Joaquin Valley has come alive with a celebration of its agricultural harvest known as **THE BIG FRESNO FAIR**.



The first fair, beginning on October 7, 1884, ran five days and consisted mainly of a horse racing meet for trotters, a livestock department and few produce exhibits, including a 105 pound pumpkin from the Hughes Ranch. "Confidence", a three year old race horse was favored to win the opening day handicap, where a purse of \$100 went to the winner. Many of Fresno's first families were in the grandstand, but some were elegant and preferred to view the proceedings from their carriages parked in the infield. Perhaps your great grandparents thrilled to the opening race at The Big Fresno Fair.

Managed by the Fresno Fairgrounds Association and it's founding father, Dr. Lewis Leach, exhibits and events continued to multiply until 1893. Then the fair went through a period of change and uncertainty.

With the hiring of manager Clyde Eberhart in 1910, The Big Fresno Fair began to take hold as a tradition. In 1920 the Fresno Chamber of Commerce took over the fair's management and continued until 1931. The Fair floundered briefly at the time but was rescued by the Fresno County Junior Farm Bureau, a group of young men who secured a \$300 loan and resurrected the Fair. They were responsible for many changes, such as clean fairgrounds and first-rate exhibits. Fair attendance grew by leaps and bounds. In the early thirties the practice of charging admission for exhibits and events inside their grounds was abolished and The Big Fresno Fair adopted a "One-Pay-Gate". This policy was so successful that soon most fairs throughout the nation adopted it. Today, at the Fresno Fair, Most entertainment and special events are still free once the fairgoer has paid the entrance gate admission.

World War II halted the fair for six years, from 1942 to 1947. The Fairgrounds first became a temporary holding facility for Japanese Americans interned by the U.S. Government, and later was a military base for processing new recruits.

In 1948 the Fair emerged reborn and continued to grow over the next quarter-century and today ranks as one of the largest fair in California. Located in what is now the world's agricultural capital, the Big Fresno Fair attracts over 650,000 attendees each year. You may call The Big Fresno Fair Office for any additional information, (559-650-FAIR).