

PIMA COUNTY FAIR HISTORY

The Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. wishes to express their appreciation to the following individuals for their time and assistance in the production of this history.

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Present Southwestern Fair Commission:
(As of 2011)

James Grimes, President – 09/26/1995
Judy Patrick, Secretary – 10/01/2000
Donald Clark, Treasurer – 07/02/2002
Marvin Selke, Board Member – 08/19/1986
Rocco Bene, Board Member – 09/07/2010

Present Southwestern Fair Commission:
(Updated-2025)

Garrett Ham, President
Judy Patrick, Secretary
Mark Cowley, Treasurer
Marian LaLonde
Alan Levin
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Marvin Selke, Emeritus Member

PIMA COUNTY FAIR HALL OF FAME

In recognition of countless hours of service and selfless dedication, the following individuals were recognized as the inaugural inductees into the Pima County Fair Hall of Fame.

2011

John B. Ryland
S.Y. Barkley
Harold Thurber
Donald Butler
Jean Buzzard
Al Mallis
Guy Leavitt
Charlene Leavitt
Rik Nakatani
Dr. Marvin R. Selke
James T. Grimes

PIMA COUNTY FAIR HALL OF FAME UPDATES

Since the 2011 Pima County Fair, the following individuals have been inducted into the Pima County Fair Hall of Fame.

2012: Governor Raul H. Castro, Jo Clark and Ralph Hall
2013: Cecilia Grondin, Toni Fiori and Jerry Rasmussen
2014: Judy Mellor, Gene Reid and Donna Wahl
2015: Sharon Landeen and Mary Ellen Roberts
2016: Jose Bernal and Judy Patrick
2017: Donald Clark and Curt Peters
2018: Peggy Bauernfeind and Sharon Knop
2019: Jan Levin and Kay Moreno
2022: William Estes III, Garrett Ham and Kris Ham
2023: Jeff Eppley and Dr. Edwin J. Konrath, Jr.
2024: Jamie Jameson and Jim Murphy
2024: Pam Skomski and Cinda and Doug Stidvent

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INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this document was to record the history of the Pima County Fair during the 100-year period from the time that the first fair was held in 1911. This information was compiled over the past four years. No previous review of fairs in Pima County to document their history has ever been undertaken.

A committee was formed to represent the various segments of fair history. Their emphasis was to write individual reports covering numerous areas pertaining to fairground activities. These reports cover agricultural and other exhibits, motor sports, horse shows, youth activities, entertainment events, antique displays, facilities development and location changes. It was felt that these reports should also cover interim events, facility user groups and organizations that hosted events or helped develop fairground facilities. Many of these groups such as the Tucson Rodeo and the Southern Arizona International Livestock Show have been closely tied to the Pima County Fair at various times since its beginning.

An attempt was made to document the management of the fairs from their beginning as well as to review the activities of the current Southwestern Fair Commission (SWFC) board. Because the fairs have been managed by a variety of different boards and commissions over the years, there basically were no long-term records that had been passed on to the SWFC which has been responsible for operating the existing fairgrounds facility since 1975.

One of the major sources of information on the early years of the Fair was the microfilm files of The Arizona Daily Star and The Tucson Citizen. Since most of the papers prior to 1953 were not indexed, this was a time consuming and tedious process. Other valuable sources of documents have been the archives at the libraries of the Arizona Historical Society and the University of Arizona. Minutes of meetings, programs and catalogs obtained by committee members have also been a valuable resource. Many of the committee members have a wealth of personal knowledge that was invaluable in writing their individual reports.

Early on, it was planned to have a celebration of the 100th Pima County Fair in 2010. However, in the preliminary research on the early fairs, it was soon discovered that there were some gaps when there were several years in a row when no fairs were held. As a result, it was decided to hold a celebration in 2011 in recognition of 100 years since the first Pima County Fair was held.

Information gleaned from these reports was used to tell the story of the Fair through a Centennial booklet, news releases, web pages and other advertisements for the 2011 Fair and beyond. This information was also used to develop both temporary and permanent displays to inform the public of the past history of the fairs in Pima County.

In writing these reports, every attempt was made to be as historically accurate as possible. It should also be recognized that it would be impossible to report on every activity that has taken place during all of the fairs and to recognize all of the many individuals and groups that have contributed to the history of this significant Pima County event.

In citing articles throughout this report, whether words were capitalized or not, wasn't always consistent. In other instances, the spelling or grammar was consistent with the time period involved. If these "errors" are found in this history, it should be noted that it usually was "written in its original form" as found in the referenced source.

While the history of the fair is interesting and informative, the future is exciting and bright. The SWFC board and staff undertook a comprehensive master planning process in 2008. In 2010 they retained the internationally renowned master plan consulting firm,

Populous, to assist in this endeavor. The plan, when completed in the summer of 2011, will outline the future for fairgrounds development for the next 20 years. We hope you enjoy reading about this history and appreciate the rich history that helped create your Pima County Fair.

Jon Baker, Executive Director
Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc.

NAMES, LOCATIONS AND DATES OF PIMA COUNTY FAIRS

The first Pima County Fair was held from October 25-27, 1911. (1)(2) It is interesting to note that this was one year before Arizona received statehood in 1912. However, four counties (Mohave, Pima, Yavapai and Yuma) had been created in 1864 following the organization of the Arizona Territory in 1862.

The idea for the first fair came about when, in early 1911, a pioneer poultry man of the vicinity conceived the idea of promoting a poultry show and secured the assistance of the chamber of commerce. An excellent showing was made, comparing favorably with those at the state fair. As a result, the idea was for it to “be made an annual event and the nucleus for a county fair”. (3)

This first fair in Pima County was held at Elysian Grove, at that time an “amusement park” at the southern end of the city of Tucson. This area is located south of the Tucson Convention Center. It is about where Carrillo Elementary Magnet School (440 S. Main) is located. (4) This fair was followed by another fair at the same location on October 17- 19, 1912. It was called the Second Annual Southern Arizona Fair. (5)

An article in the Arizona magazine indicated that there was going to be another Southern Arizona Fair from October 21-25, 1913 at a new fairgrounds. (6) However, apparently this did not happen. An editorial in the Tucson Citizen on March 17, 1915 stated that because the new grounds were not complete, the fair was not held the previous year. (7)

As a result, the Third Annual Southern Arizona Fair was held from March 18-20, 1915. A Southern Arizona Fair Association had been formed for the purpose of broadening the scope of the fair and helping it serve all of southern Arizona. The Association acquired 78 acres of land on the outskirts of Tucson, on the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad where this fair was held. A five-mile auto racing track and a half mile track for harness racing were also included. (8)

According to Roy Drachman’s book on the early history of Tucson, the fairgrounds was “east of the extended line of South Campbell Avenue and south of the Southern Pacific railroad tracks. East Thirty-Sixth Street, as it is now located, would have run pretty close to the southern boundary of the fairgrounds”. (4) However, an early Tucson road map, issued by the Chamber of Commerce of Tucson, has an oval identified as the “So. Ariz. Fair Grounds” extending further south. It came close to where the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad was then located. (9) This was also the rail line which provided transportation to the fair from downtown Tucson in 1915. Another article in 1940, states that “Many years ago, according to Fred Ronstadt, county fairs were held at the fairgrounds on the Benson highway”. (10) Therefore, it appears that the fairgrounds was more in the vicinity north of the Kino Sports Complex with the auto track extending north, more than likely beyond the present 36th Street and close to the Southern Pacific rail lines.

The March date was apparently somewhat unfavorable for acquiring agricultural products for display. Consequently, it was decided to hold another Southern Arizona Fair in the fall. Manager John B. Ryland said: “We figured that it would be a good idea to hold

a mid-winter show just to try it out and see how the folks like it". He also stated that "Just remember that the Southern Arizona Fair which will positively be held next fall, a week before the state fair in Phoenix, rain or shine, European war or peace, Mexican revolution or millennium, will be a show that no farmer can afford to miss". (11) Dates of that fair were November 4-6, 1915. (12)

In 1916, the Fourth Annual SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR was again held on a fall date and at the same location from October 26-28. (13) The following year the fair was shortened to a two-day event and was held on November 3-4, 1917. (14) An article in The Arizona Daily Star on October 19, 1918 reported that the county council of defense had met and adopted a resolution favoring the discontinuance of the Southern Arizona Fair and the State Fair until after the war. The state fair had been postponed because of the influenza epidemic which left the county fair commissioner with a number of perishable farm products which would have been exhibited at the state fair as well as the county fair. (15) Nevertheless, the 1918 Southern Arizona Fair was scheduled for November 22-24. (16)

Then on November 1st, it was reported that Manager Herbert Drachman had announced that the Fair would not be held that year. The reason given was that the State Fair had been called off and as a result the Southern Arizona Fair would be deprived of a representative exhibit which had previously been shown at both fairs. A further reason was that the fair might result in incidental interference with war activities. (17) The combination of the 1918 Flu pandemic (commonly known as the Spanish Flu) and the ongoing WWI were both significant reasons for its cancellation. There was not another fair held in the county until 1929.

In the publication TUCSON, in January 1929, C.P. Brown, the County Agricultural Agent, wrote "After a period of twelve or thirteen years, Pima County is going to have another fair". (18) This event, called the Pima County Mid-Winter Fair and Rodeo, was held in conjunction with La Fiesta de los Vaqueros from February 21-24, 1929. (19) It was held at the rodeo grounds of the Santa Catalina Polo Association. (20) In other reports, this location was referred to as Catalina Field or Kramer Field. This neighborhood is now known as Catalina Vista and is located east of Campbell Avenue between Grant and Elm Streets. (21)

In a history of La Fiesta de los Vaqueros, it was reported that the Arizona Polo Association, in cooperation with the Pima County Fair Commission and the city of Tucson, sponsored the 1930 and 1931 Rodeos, the last ones held at Catalina Field. (22)

In 1931, the Tucson Rodeo Committee and the Pima County Fair Commission began making plans for a new location for a combined facility for the Rodeo and annual fair. The former Municipal Airport Grounds, the site of the first Municipal Airport in the United States, was available since the dedication of Davis Monthan Field in 1927. (22)

In 1932 the site for the fair moved to that location. According to the fair catalog for that year, it was located four miles south of Tucson on Nogales Road. This Southern Arizona Fair was held in conjunction with the annual rodeo and was called the Southern Arizona Fair and Rodeo. The date was February 19-22. (23) This location at South 6th Avenue and Irvington Road is still the home of the annual La Fiesta de los Vaqueros. This site has often been referred to as the Rodeo Grounds. The Tucson Chamber of Commerce and the Pima County Fair Commission took over the operation of the Rodeo that year. (22)

The Southern Arizona Fair held in 1933 truly represented the counties in the southern part of Arizona. In addition to Pima County there were exhibits from Yuma, Pinal, Greenlee, Graham, Cochise and Santa Cruz counties. (24) An article in the Tucson Daily Citizen on February 22, 1935 reported on winners of the poultry show that morning. (25)

This event was held at the same time as La Fiesta de los Vaqueros and the Tucson Livestock Show. (26)

In 1929, local groups of Indians took part in the rodeo celebration for the first time, “adding color to the gay pageant of cowboys”. No actual Indian Day was held but they took part in the parade and Indian riders and ropers entered the arena events. Not until 1934 was an actual Indian Day established. That day was set aside for the Indians and included competitive sports, races, other special events and tribal ceremonies. At the same time that the Indians entered into participation, an industrial show was added. (27)

During the mid to late 1930s, the La Fiesta de los Vaqueros, the rodeo parade, the Tucson Livestock Show (a beef cattle and horse show), Indian day and an Industrial fair were all held at the Rodeo Grounds at the same time. These were separate events but shared the same dates and location. The status of the County Fair during this time period is unclear. An article in The Arizona Daily Star in 1937 refers to the rodeo, the livestock show, Indian Days and the Industrial Fair but does not mention the Pima County Fair. (28)

However, another article on February 14, 1938 stated that C. W. (Jack) Gardner, chairman of the Pima County fair commission and director of the industrial exposition, an annual presentation in conjunction with the rodeo, states that “this year’s exposition is to be a Southern Arizona Merchants Parade of Progress”. The same article said that “Children from every institution in Pima County where underprivileged children are cared for will be guests of the fair commission on Saturday, February 19”. (29) In 1938, the Chamber of Commerce was the driving force sponsoring the annual La Fiesta de los Vaqueros. The Pima County Fair Commission assisted in presenting the horse show as well as the industrial fair and Livestock Show. (22)

A schedule for the combined events in 1939 gave dates and times for a variety of activities. Included were the Indian Day, Rodeo, Parade, Horse Show, Industrial Exposition, Midway and Poultry Show. Again, no mention was made of the Pima County Fair. (30)

An article in the 1940 Official Rodeo Program stated that there had been a successful Southern Arizona Fair in 1933. It went on to state that “at this time (after 1933) all appropriations were discontinued due to the “great depression” and nothing further was done until the present year (1940). During the interim, the Southern Arizona Poultry Producers continued to have a poultry show each year by “panhandling” their own financing. During this same period, an industrial show was held each year due to the efforts of C. W. (Jack) Gardner and B. A. Pilcher”. (10)

An article in the February 23, 1940 Arizona Daily Star again specifically refers to the Pima County Fair. (31) The 1940 Rodeo was the last Rodeo with dual sponsorship with the Pima County Fair Commission. (22)

Because of the efforts of the country in conducting World War II, the Pima County Fair as well as the Rodeo and parade were cancelled for 1943. (32) Following that, there were no county fairs held in Pima County from 1943-1947.

The first post-war fair was held from February 11-15, 1948, and was held at the Rodeo Grounds. (33) However, it was not held in conjunction with La Fiesta de los Vaqueros as had been done in the pre-war years. (34) The rodeo that year was held on February 20- 23. (35) The Tucson Livestock Show, together with the 14th annual horse division, was held at the Rodeo grounds concurrently with the Pima County Fair. (36)

In 1949, the Pima County Fair was moved to a fall date, October 26-30, (37) (38) after being held in February on the same dates as the rodeo from 1929-1942 and a week earlier in 1948. The fair continued to be held at the South 6th location on fall dates through 1958.

In 1959, the ten members of the fair commission, including the fair boss, J. O. Niemann, resigned in a body. Operation of the county fairgrounds by a non-profit corporation was given legal clearance in a report to the County Board of Supervisors.

(39) As a result, it was decided to integrate the Pima County Fair with the Southern Arizona International Livestock Show (put on by the Southern Arizona International Livestock Association or SAILA). Harold Thurber, a prominent Arizona cattleman, doubled as chairman of the Fair Committee and president of SAILA. (40)

Among the changes that occurred as a result of this merger was the elimination of the October fair dates in favor of a March event. (40) Consequently, there was no fair held in 1959. The first combined show was held at the S. 6th Ave. Fairgrounds on March 9-13, 1960. (41) (42)

There had been plans to move the 1971 fair to a new 360-acre site at Houghton and Dawn Road. These plans were cancelled when the county didn't have time to construct any new buildings on the site. (43) In 1972, the fair was moved to its current location at 11300 South Houghton Road.

The relationship whereby SAILA conducted the Pima County Fair from 1960 through 1974 was terminated after the 1974 fair. At that time, the Southwestern Fair Commission was formed and conducted the fair in 1975 and continues to do so at the present time.

In 1975, the fair's name was changed from the Pima County Fair to the Pima Town and Country Fair. (44) This title was used until 1980 when the name reverted back to the Pima County Fair.

CITATIONS

1. Pima County Fair Commissioners Complete Arrangements for Opening on October 25th. *The Tucson Citizen*. 12 October 1911: 8-9.
2. FIRST PIMA COUNTY FAIR WILL OPEN WEDNESDAY MORNING. *The Tucson Citizen*. 24 October 1911: 5.
3. SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR BENEFIT TO EVERY TUCSON INDUSTRY. *The Tucson Citizen*. 15 October 1913: 3.
4. Drachman, Roy P. *From Cowtown to Desert Metropolis*. Whitewing Press. 1999: 146.
5. Premium List and Program (found at Arizona Historical Society, Tucson-Library and Archives). *SECOND ANNUAL SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR*. 1912.
6. Myers, Jno. F. SOUTHERN ARIZONA. *ARIZONA* publication. Volume 3, September 1913: 9 & 13.
7. THE SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR. *The Tucson Citizen*. 17 March 1915: Editorial and Magazine section.
8. PROGRAM and PREMIUM LIST (found at University of Arizona Library-Special Collections). *Third Annual Southern Arizona Fair*. 1915.
9. ROAD MAP (found at Arizona Historical Society, Tucson-Library and Archives). *Chamber of Commerce Tucson-Arizona*. 1918.
10. Embleton, Harry. PIMA COUNTY FAIR. TUCSON-OFFICIAL RODEO PROGRAM. *La Fiesta de los Vaqueros*. February 1940: 26.
11. ANOTHER FAIR WILL BE HELD IN THE FALL. *The Tucson Citizen*. 17 March 1915: 6.
12. Prepare Your Exhibits for the Southern Arizona Fair (advertisement). *Tucson Citizen*. 3 November 1915: 3.
13. PROGRAM and Premium List. (found at the University of Arizona Library-Special Collections). *Fourth Annual SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR*. 1916.

14. SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR (advertisement). *The Arizona Daily Star*. 1 November 1917: 3.
15. County Council Asks Postponement of Fair Until After the War. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 19 October 1918: 2.
16. Southern Arizona Fair Dates November 22-24. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 23 October 1918: 6.
17. SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR ABANDONED BECAUSE OF WAR AND OTHER REASONS. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 1 November 1918: 6.
18. Brown, C. B. FAIR AND RODEO planned for February. *TUCSON publication*. January 1929: 5.
19. Premium Catalogue (found at Arizona Historical Society, Tucson-Library/Archives). *Pima County Mid-Winter Fair and Rodeo*. 1929.
20. Lord, Frank. Extensive Exhibits Feature Opening Day of Pima Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 22 February 1929: 1.
21. TUCSON'S LA FIESTA DE LOS VACQUEROS BEGAN WITH A BANG. www.tucsonrodeo.com/history. 13 August 2007.
22. Lauber, Ferd. (Chairman, Historical Committee) "La Fiesta de los Vaqueros" 1925-1987. *Tucson Rodeo Committee*. 1990: 2, 3 & 6.
23. Premium List (found at University of Arizona Library-Special Collections). *Southern Arizona FAIR & RODEO at TUCSON*. 1932.
24. Brown, C. B. Seven Counties Aid Southern Arizona Fair. *TUCSON publication*. March, 1933: 6.
25. POULTRY WINNERS CHOSEN AT FAIR. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 22 February 1935: 4.
26. RODEO EDITION. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 22 February 1935: 1.
27. Rodeo Has Thrilled Visitors 15 Years. *Tucson Daily Citizen-Section 4*. 21 February 1939: 2.
28. LIVESTOCK SHOW OPENS HERE TODAY. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 18 February 1937: 1 & 4.
29. Industry Will Have Its Day At Exposition. *Tucson Daily Citizen* (Onward Tucson Edition). 14 February 1938: 10.
30. STAGE SET FOR TUCSON RODEO. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 23 February 1939: 1.
31. COUNTY FAIR IS IN FULL SWING DESPITE A RAIN. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 23 February 1940: A1 & 7.
32. ALL EFFORTS TURN TOWARD WAR SUCCESS. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 22 February 1943: A.
33. Kalil, Dorothy. Noises Are Wonderful at First County Fair Since Before War. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 12 February 1948: A1.
34. PIMA COUNTY FAIR (advertisement). *The Arizona Daily Star*. 10 February 1948: 8.
35. Ride 'em Cowboy (advertisement). *The Arizona Daily Star*. 12 February 1948: A5.
36. Eastern Horse Show Critics Note Entries' Good Condition. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 11 February 1948: A1.
37. Cobb, Norman C., Secretary, Pima County Fair Commission. Letter to Arizona Pioneer Historical Society (found at Arizona Historical Society, Tucson Library/Archives). 13 June 1949.
38. PIMA COUNTY FAIR advertisement. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 26 October 1949: 4B

39. Non-Profit Fair Group Possible. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 16 February 1959: 2.
40. Inskeep, Lester. County Fair, Livestock Show Merger Okayed. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 14 July 1959: B1.
41. Stock Show, Fair Open Today. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 9 March 1960: 1.
42. Advertisement. SOUTHERN ARIZONA INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK SHOW and PIMA COUNTY Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 9 March 1960: A6.
43. Pima Fair To Be Held At Same Old Location. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 5 January 1971: A2.
44. Doug Kershaw To Lead Entertainers As Fair Opens Wednesday. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 24 March 1975: B1.

EARLY FAIR COMMISSIONS AND BOARDS

The fairs which have been held in Tucson and Pima County during the past 100 years have been organized and managed by a number of different boards and commissions. Those familiar with Tucson history will recognize many family names of individuals that were prominent in conducting these events.

The following group was responsible for the first Pima County Fair in 1911. (1)

Commissioners:	Superintendents of Departments:
M. P. Freeman, President	Agriculture and Horticulture-E. D. Trout
Epes Randolph, 1st Vice President	Bench Show and Pets-T. T. Smith
S.Y. Barkley, 2nd Vice President	Educational-W. M. Pryce
J. M. Ormsby, Treasurer	Livestock-J. B. Ryland
H. V. Failor, Secretary	Minerals-C. F. Tolman
	Poultry-W. H. Baker
	Women's-Mrs. Walter J. Wakefield

The following article appeared in The Tucson Citizen and gives some of the background of several of the men most prominent in making the first fairs in Pima County a reality. (2) It also gives some insight into the fairs in 1911 and 1912 as well as the formation of the organization which conducted the fairs in 1915-1917.

REALIZATION OF FAIR RESULT OF CONSISTENT BOOSTING

Idea Originated with John B. Ryland and S.Y. Barkley, Good Boosters and True The Southern Arizona Fair may be said to have originated in the minds of John B. Ryland and S. Y. Barkley who succeeded in interesting the chamber of commerce in holding two "exhibit fairs" at Elysian grove in the fall of 1911 and 1912. The success of these fairs was so encouraging from the standpoint of exhibits and interest shown in them by the public that Colonel Epes Randolph invited a number of fair enthusiasts to a dinner at the Santa Rita hotel following the 1912 exhibition. At this dinner it was decided to organize a corporation to be known as the Southern Arizona Fair association to be capitalized for \$50,000, the stock of the association to be subscribed by local boosters.

The association was formed in a short time and incorporated, \$40,000 worth of stock was sold and construction of the present plant began. The plant is now completed. It consists of a grandstand with capacity of 3,000-and-a-half-mile horse track within an enclosure of seventy-eight acres and a four-mile auto racetrack, part of which is enclosed. There are also box stalls for cattle and pens for sheep, goats, swine and ostriches.

The construction of the plant has been in process for a year or more under the supervision of the fair executive committee composed of J.W. Estill, Fred Ronstadt, J.B. Ryland, S.Y. Barkley, and John F. Myers, secretary of the Tucson chamber of commerce. All are local businessmen, serving without compensation "for the good of the cause". To Ryland and Barkley has fallen the brunt of the supervision and usual troubles of a fair, partly because they "started it" and partly because they had more time than some of the other directors.

Mr. Barkley is an old resident of Arizona and Tucson and is known throughout the entire state. Ryland came here from Cincinnati five years ago and has been one of the city's consistent boosters ever since. He immediately became interested in the Heidel hotel, Bell Drug company, and until lately was a director of the Merchants Bank and Trust Company

Members of the Pima County Fair Commission, appointed by the board of supervisors, were responsible for conducting the Pima County Mid-Winter Fair and Rodeo in 1929. They were J.C. Kinney: Chairman, A.H. Condron: Secretary, J. M. Ronstadt, W. A. Julian, Frank O'Rielly, Col. H. W. Tatum, Art Brooks, Judge Emery, Frank Jordan, B. I. Green, Frank J. Cordis, L. H. Manning, Warden Johnson and George K. Smith. These men represented a large number of organizations in the city and county. (3)(4)

Officers for the fair and rodeo were Judge A. J. Emery: Managing Director and Edward O. Lunt, Jr.: Secretary in charge of office details. Judge Emery was the founder of Emery Park also known as the Emery Cooperative Poultry Colony. He stated that its' purpose was to "establish a community of people who engage in the poultry business in a cooperative body, buying their feed and supplies and marketing their products". (5) He was also a real estate agent. (3)

In 1932, the Southern Arizona Fair and Rodeo appeared to have several bodies that had responsibilities for the event. In an obvious attempt to make the fair and rodeo more representative of all of southern Arizona, there were representatives on these boards from Cochise, Greenlee, Pinal, Santa Cruz and Yuma counties as well as Pima. The Southern Arizona Fair officers were: R.E. Webster, Douglas: President, Malcolm Middleton, Nogales: Vice-president, A.H. Condron, Tucson: Secretary-Treasurer and C. B. Brown, Tucson: Director. Dr. D. G. Leach of Tucson was the chairman of the Executive Committee. There were two members from each county on the Commission and 15 members on the Pima County Fair Commission. (6)

In 1940, the Pima County Fair Commission, set up by the board of supervisors, consisted of C. W. (Jack) Gardner as chairman, C. B. Brown as secretary and treasurer, and B. A. Pilcher, Freeman Woods, Charles Dietz, Albert Lent, B.H. Ormand, W. T. McClelland, R. H. Martin. H. O. Jaastad, W. C. Collier, Malcolm Middleton, Joe S. Wright, Harry Embleton, Harry Blacklidge and Henry Boice as members. (7)

The entire fair commission resigned in 1959. (8) Consequently, a new seven-member Pima County Fair Commission was named by the County Board of Supervisors. Those appointed were Fred Blanc, J.O. Niemann, Manny Gunn, Harold Thurber, Jack Goodman, Fred Mayhugh and Meade Cole. (9) Harold Thurber was named as Chairman of the Fair Committee as well as being President of the Southern Arizona International Livestock Association. (10) Harold Thurber was a prominent Hereford cattle breeder who operated the Singing Valley Ranch north of Sonoita until 1969. He was born in Bay Shore, Long Island the son of a sea captain and ship builder. After high school, he was hired to sail a private yacht before joining the Navy during World War II. In 1921 he left New York

for health reasons and moved to Arizona where he got into the cow-calf ranching operations in Arizona and Nevada before getting involved with purebred Herefords. (11) He was involved with livestock shows for over 40 years and was instrumental in getting the fair moved to its current location on S. Houghton Road in 1972.

Some conflicts occurred between Thurber and those associated with 4-H as well as some County officials in the early 1970's. As a result, the relationship whereby SAILA conducted the Pima County Fair from 1960 through 1974, with Thurber very much in charge of both, was terminated after the 1974 Fair. The move to the Houghton Road site probably would never have happened if it had not been for Thurber's involvement. Thurber Hall, located on the fairgrounds, is named after him.

CITATIONS

1. Pima County Fair Commissioners Complete Arrangements for Opening on October 25th. *The Tucson Citizen*. 12 October 1911: 8-9.
2. Myers, John F. REALIZATION OF FAIR RESULT OF CONSISTENT BOOSTING. *The Tucson Citizen*. 17 March 1915: 4
3. SELECT BOARD HAS CHARGE OF ARRANGEMENTS. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 20 February 1929: 10.
4. Premium Catalogue (found at Arizona Historical Society, Tucson-Library/Archives). Pima County Mid-Winter Fair and Rodeo. 1929.
5. Judge Emery Sees His Fond Hopes Realized. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 20 February 1929:
6. Premium List (found at the University of Arizona Library-Special Collections). Southern Arizona FAIR and RODEO. 1932.
7. Embleton, Harry. PIMA COUNTY FAIR. TUCSON-OFFICIAL RODEO PROGRAM. *La Fiesta de los Vaqueros*. February 1940: 26.
8. Non-Profit Group Possible. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 16 February 1959: 2.
9. Supervisors Name 7-Man County Fair Commission. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 4 March 1959: B7.
10. Inskeep, Lester. County Fair, Livestock Show Merger Okayed. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 14 July 1959: B1.
11. Harold Thurber. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 18 March 1972: 3.

SOUTHWESTERN FAIR COMMISSION, INC.

The activities which take place at the Pima County Fairgrounds are currently the responsibility of the Southwestern Fair Commission. Prior to its formation, the Pima County Fair was conducted by the Southern Arizona International Livestock Association, headed by Harold Thurber, from 1960-74. A "longstanding sense of friction between the county's 4-H Leaders Association and the Pima County Fair Commission" surfaced publicly in 1971. (1) In addition, in 1972, one of the Board of Supervisors "expressed concern over the emergency that exists to properly plan usage of the fairgrounds and the Rillito (racetrack) property". (2) The vision of a group of individuals that met in late 1974 to decide on the future of the Pima County Fair was that a new organization needed to be formed to oversee the activities conducted at the Pima County Fair.

As a result of their recommendation, a resolution was passed by the Pima County Board of Supervisors on September 16, 1974 which dissolved the existing Pima County Fair Commission and formed a new Pima County Fair Commission.

That resolution also stated that the Commission shall:

- a. advise the Board of Supervisors as to the conduct and management of the county fair,
- b. negotiate with and supervise the participation of exhibitors, shows, entertainment, carnivals and other events at the fair,
- c. assist and advise the Pima County Parks and Recreation Department in developing and maintaining a site and facilities for the fair,
- d. encourage and negotiate the participation of civic clubs and organizations in the fair, and
- e. perform other duties in furtherance of the fair as shall be directed by a majority of the members of the Board of Supervisors. (3)

The five men appointed to this new commission were Donald Butler (Chairman), Dale Barrus (Vice Chairman), Gene C. Reid, Albert A. Mallis, and William N. Dameron. (4)

Numerous meetings with members of the new Commission, various Pima County staff members, and representatives of the Southern Arizona International Livestock Association (SAILA) were held to try to determine the best approach to conducting the Pima County Fair and other activities on land on Houghton Road that had been acquired by SAILA.

The September 16, 1974, resolution of the Board of Supervisors also suggested the formation of a non-profit organization. The resulting Articles of Incorporation for the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. (SWFC) were signed by the five incorporators on December 5, 1974. The five men who made up this group were the same group that had been appointed to the newly formed Pima County Fair Commission (Butler, Barrus, Reid, Mallis and Dameron). The papers were filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission on January 17, 1975. A Certificate of Incorporation was issued on January 27, 1975. (5) Initially, when the Pima County Fair Commission was formed, five commissioners were appointed by the full Board of Supervisors, not individual appointments by each supervisor. In the early 1980's, the method was changed with each of the five supervisors having an appointee on the Commission. Membership in the Southwestern Fair Commission is confined to those persons appointed to the Pima County Fair Commission. In the early years of the Southwestern Fair Commission, members of the Pima County Fair Commission were supposed to elect themselves as directors of the SWFC. This requirement was stated in the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the SWFC although minutes of annual meetings indicate that this formality was not always carried out. (6)

Gene Reid's appointment to the SWFC was changed in 1986 (7) to that of Director Emeritus and he served in that capacity until his death on September 6, 1999. (8) Consequently, there were a total of six members on the Commission during this period. In 1994, it was determined that this might have created a problem in that the original Articles of Incorporation stated that the number of directors will consist of five persons elected by the membership. As a result, the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of the SWFC were amended and restated in 1994 to deal with this situation. The current Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws state that the membership on the Board of Directors shall be at least five but not more than seven members. These documents also state that all members appointed to the Pima County Fair Commission shall automatically be directors of the SWFC without the need for election by the members. (9) (10) Currently, there are five members on the Commission. The duration of early appointments was somewhat variable. Since the 1980's, the appointments have been for four-year terms although a number of Commissioners have been reappointed several times. (11)

The Pima County Fairgrounds is owned by Pima County and the SWFC leases it under a "Management Agreement for the Pima County Fairgrounds". (12) The first such

agreement was effective on December 1, 1975 thru July 1, 1978. There was also a right and option for the county to renew this agreement for a subsequent period of two years.

Later agreements have been for longer periods of time and the current agreement, which was effective on February 6, 2007, will end on June 30, 2031. This agreement may be renewed or extended, upon written agreement of both the Board of Supervisors and the Commission, for an additional twenty-five-year period.

There have been a lot of changes in the operation of the fairgrounds that have occurred over the years since the SWFC was formed in 1975. With the growth and scope of the various activities that currently take place on the fairgrounds, the financial accountability of the Commission has required putting into place budgeting and accounting practices that were not deemed necessary in the early years. The most recent Management Agreement with Pima County has enabled the Commission more opportunities for fiscal management and long-term planning.

The long-term relationship that has been established with Ray Cammack Shows has been good for both parties since the annual fair is the Commission's single largest source of revenue. There have also been significant improvements in the scope and quality of the equestrian facilities. As a result, the horse shows are the second most important segment for revenue. The leasing of the two motor sports tracks has allowed the staff to spend more time on other activities.

Some of the challenges that face the Commission are the need for upgrading infrastructure, including electrical services and roads, as well as meeting water and sewer needs. The general maintenance and upkeep of the current buildings as they age is also a constant area of concern.

PAST AND CURRENT MEMBERS, FAIR MANAGERS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF THE SOUTHWESTERN FAIR COMMISSION, INC. (13)

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION (As of 2011)

Barrus, Dale 1975-1976

Butler, Donald 1975-1986, 1st President and served as such until 5/21/84

Dameron, William N. 1975-1980

Mallis, Albert A. 1975-1980

Reid, Gene 1975-1999

Cowan, James 1976-1986, President: 5/21/84-8/25/87

Gonzalez, Frank 1980-1984

Miller, Richard E. 1980-1992, President: 8/25/87-1/24/89

Bernal, Ray 1984-1995, President: 1/24/89-2/25/92

Collins, Richard 1986-1995

Selke, Marvin 1986-present, President: 2/25/92-3/29/94

(UPDATE: President: 6/31/2012 – 1/28/21)* Status changed to Emeritus Member on 6/27/2024

Wong, Ralph 1986-2000, President: 3/29/94-9/12/00

Metz, Forrest 1992-1997

Grimes, James 1995-present, President: 9/12/00-to date (UPDATE: Deceased 3/30/2012)

Peterson, James D. 1995-1998

Parise, Frank 1997-2002

Linneman, Joanne 1998-2002

Patrick, Judy 2000-present

Clark, Donald 2002-present (UPDATE: Retired 12/31/17)
Hopkins, Steve 2002-2010
Bene, Rocco W. 2010-present (UPDATE: Resigned 6/10/2015)

NEW MEMBERS added after 2011.

Cesare, Jeff 2012 – 2016
Levin, Alan 2015 – Present
Muphy, Jim 2015 – Present
Cowley, Mark 2016 – Present
Ham, Garrett 2017 – Present, President 1/28/21 – Present
Allen, Ron 2018 – 2021
LaLonde, Marion 2022 – Present
Sheena Conner 2024 -Present

FAIR MANAGERS

Arden, Phil 1975
Baker, Jon 2001 Interim Fair Manager

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Barron, Tex 1976-1979
Nicholson, Paul 1980-1988
Murphy, Jack 1988-2000
Tedeschi, Vito 2000-2001 Baker,
Jon 2001-present

SOUTHWESTERN FAIR COMMISSION, INC. UPDATES

On March 30, 2012, James T. Grimes passed away. He had served on the Commission since 1995, the last 12 years as president. His leadership role on the commission and his friendship with many will be sorely missed. As a remembrance of him, a permanent neon sign saying “JIMMY’S BAR” was placed in the Cantina. Jeff Cesare was appointed to fill his position on the Commission.

On June 3, 2014, the Pima County Board of Supervisors passed Resolution 2014-56 which increased the size of the Pima County Fair Commission from five to seven members. Nominations for replacements for five of the members will come from the existing Pima County Fair Commission members and nominations for the two new members and subsequent replacements will come from the County Administrator. Appointments of all members are subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors. Since Pima County Fair Commission members automatically become members of the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc., the size of the SWFC will therefore also be increased to seven members and directors.

As a result of the above noted County action, County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry recommended the appointment to new four-year terms on the PCFC Donald Clark and Marvin Selke, both of whom were already current members.

At their December 2, 2014, meeting, the Pima County Board of Supervisors approved the appointment of two new members to the Pima County Fair Commission, Alan Levin and Jim Murphy, who had been recommended by the Pima County Fair Commission. Their terms on the Commission, and concurrently their membership on the Southwestern Fair Commission, will expire on December 31, 2018.

On June 10, 2015, Rocco Bene resigned as a member of the Commission. To fill that position, Mark Cowley was appointed beginning in 2016 with his term expiring on

December 31, 2019. Judy Patrick was reappointed with her new term also expiring at the same time.

In early 2017, Garrett Ham was elected to replace Jeff Cesare, whose term on the Board had expired at the end of 2016. Mr. Ham's term, as is the other Board members, is for four years and will expire on December 31, 2020.

At the end of 2017, Donald Clark chose not to ask to be reappointed and retired from the Board after serving on it for 16 years. He served as the treasurer that entire time and his financial input was critical for the Board in many of the planning decisions that were made. He was replaced on the Board by Ronald Allen. In 2022, Ronald Allen asked not to be reappointed and was replaced by Marian LaLonde. Marian has had a long term association with the Fairgrounds, primarily with her involvement with the Southern Arizona Eventing Association.

In 2024, Marvin Selke, who was last appointed at the recommendation of the County Administrator, was replaced by Sheen Conner. Sheena is the Government Affairs Manager for Cox Communication and has a passion for supporting 4-H. Marvin had been a Board member for 38 years and had twice served as president. At the June 27th meeting, the Board voted to elect him as an Emeritus Member.

CITATIONS

1. Morrison, Patricia. 4-H'ers May Withdraw From Pima County Fair, Hold Own Contest. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 8 July 1971: 38.
2. County Fair Organizers Criticized. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 9 February 1972: C5.
17
3. Board of Supervisors of Pima County. Resolution No. 1974-124. A resolution of the Board of Supervisors of Pima County, Arizona, creating a new Pima County Fair Commission. 16 September 1974.
4. Pima County Fair Commission. Minutes of meetings. 30 September 1974 through 20 December 1974.
5. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Articles of Incorporation of the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission. 17 January 1975.
6. Rusing and Lopez, P.L.L.C. Letter to SWFC. Corporate Structure of Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. 4 October 1994.
7. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 7 August 1986: 1.
8. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 11 January 2000: 3 & Attachment #2.
9. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation, Inc. Filed with State of Arizona Corporation Commission: 6 October 1994.
10. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Amended and Restated Bylaws of the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Adopted. 13 December 1994.
11. Selke, Marvin. Member-Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Personal recollections. 2010.
12. Pima County, Arizona, Board of Supervisors and the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Management Agreement for the Pima County Fairgrounds. 6 February 2007.
13. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meetings. 7 February 1975 to date.

ACQUISITION OF HOUGHTON ROAD PROPERTY

The Pima County Board of Supervisors, in 1959, gave the Southern Arizona International Livestock Association (SAILA), under the direction of Harold Thurber, responsibility for running the County Fair and livestock show at the City owned Rodeo Grounds on South 6th Avenue. (1)(2)(3). Under the Thurber/SAILA direction, the fair grew rapidly in the mid-1960's until it was too large for the 6th Avenue facilities. (4) In 1964, Pima County obtained the lease from the state for 320 acres on Houghton Road. The Board of Supervisors viewed it as a location where a permanent facility could be developed that would be a county only project with ample parking. (5) In 1969, Thurber negotiated the purchase of the present Houghton Road site from the State. SAILA, as the only bidder, acquired 640 acres for \$192,000 with \$203,000 of mostly Pima County financed improvements to it. (6)

In the early 1970's an insurmountable disagreement developed over ownership of the Fairgrounds. The County had spent large sums of tax funds on facilities at the fairgrounds with the understanding that SAILA would deed the property to the County upon the County reimbursing SAILA for the original acquisition of \$192,000. SAILA maintained that this was not the case and there was no contract to back up the County position.

SAILA had deeded some of this original acquisition to the County to provide County ownership where bond financed improvements were built. Meanwhile the County was pushing for a broader based fair than SAILA was producing. The County was also being pressured by the State auditor to produce accounting records for fair operations and improvement expenditures that SAILA could not produce. (6)(7)(8)(9)

In early 1974, the Board of Supervisors charged the County Manager, Ken Scharman, to develop a plan for future management of the fair and fairgrounds. The management structure of a number of western fairs was evaluated by a committee of county staff assisted by Supervisors Jim Murphy and Joe Castillo. A great deal of help and advice was provided to this committee by Art Frasier, owner of Art Frasier's World Fair Shows, Inc., the concessionaire at the time for the fair midway. The recommendations of the committee closely resembled the structure of the Montana State Fair at Billings. The Board of Supervisors adopted the "Billings Committee" recommendation on September 16, 1974, which effectively ended SAILA's management of the fair. (10) (11) This decision established the current Southwestern Fair Commission. Its primary feature is a small, working board of professionals in fields necessary to fair management and operation.

The issue of fairgrounds ownership was finally resolved on June 26, 1975, when the County signed a contract to pay SAILA \$636,188 for the remaining 287.5 acres still owned by SAILA. This price included the value of the land, some SAILA financed improvements and settlement of several issues surrounding SAILA's operation of the Rillito Racetrack. (12) (13)

CITATIONS

1. Non-Profit Fair Group Possible. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 16 February 1959: 2.
2. Supervisors Name 7-Man County Fair Commission. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 4 March 1959: B7.
3. Inskeep, Lester. County Fair, Livestock Show Merger Okayed. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 14 July 1959: B1.
4. County Fair Development Calls For New Approach. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 2 May 1963: 22.

- 5, Pima Gets 320-Acre Site For County Fairgrounds. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 28 August 1964: B9.
6. Lankford, John. County fair and SAILA: 'Divorce' will end bad taste. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 27 June 1975: 1-2.
7. Godfrey, Kathryn M. Fairgrounds Result Of Sharp Bargaining. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 12 July 1971: 19.
8. Fair's Opening Day Attended By Unexpectedly Big Crowd. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 23 March 1972: B1.
9. Many Changes Being Planned For Next Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 2 December 1974: B1.
10. Patrick, Robert. Member-Pima County Fair History Committee. Personal recollections. 2010.
11. Pima County Board of Supervisors. Resolution No. 1974-124. A resolution of the Board of Supervisors of Pima County, Arizona, creating a Pima County Fair Commission. 16 September 1974.
12. Purchase Agreement (Between Southern Arizona International Livestock Association and the Pima County Board of Supervisors). 26 June 1975.
13. County acquires rest of fair site. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 27 June 1975: 2.

DEVELOPMENT OF HOUGHTON ROAD PROPERTY AND FACILITIES

The property on South Houghton Road where the Pima County Fair has been held since 1972 was originally leased from the State Land Department by the Southern Arizona International Livestock Association, Inc. (SAILA). Harold Thurber was President of both SAILA and the Fair Board at the time. SAILA purchased the property from the state in 1969. Eventually Pima County acquired the 640-acre property in 1975.

In 1971, SAILA and the Pima County Fair Commission, both nonprofit organizations, received \$50,000 of county funds to aid in building what is now commonly referred to as the Pima County Fairgrounds. The county funding was intended to pay for the construction of two large buildings called the Exhibit Building and Livestock Building (now named Thurber Hall and Pima Hall). The original cost of the two buildings in 1971 was about \$64,000. (1) Expansion and improvements to those buildings the following year totaled nearly \$70,000. (2)

The two newly constructed buildings along with the existing resources which included the current water well and three old Quonsets that came from Polo Village at the University of Arizona were all that existed prior to the 1972 Pima County Fair.

Largely due to an appropriation from the Governors' Fund, which was made possible by then Governor Raul Castro, the Livestock Barn, as it is now known, was constructed in 1976. (3)(4) At the February 18, 1977, meeting of the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. (SWFC) it was "Resolved, the building known as the 'New Products Building' would be renamed the 'H. B. Thurber Hall', and said building to be dedicated as such during the SAILA Livestock Show, March 17-20, 1977". It was "Further Resolved, the Equestrian/Livestock Complex at the Fairgrounds would be named 'The Castro Livestock Center' and would be so dedicated on the opening day of the 1977 Pima Town & Country Fair, April 15". (5)

The Amphitheater (now the Main Stage) was constructed in 1978. This project was closely followed by building a new Multi-Purpose Building (now Old Pueblo Hall). It was proposed that the 4-H Division, FFA, Fine Arts, Home Arts, and the University of Arizona

displays be moved into the new building. (6)

In 1980, the Ramada on the east side of the Livestock Barn was completed. (7) At the December 9, 1980 meeting of the SWFC, approval was given to secure a loan and to proceed to construct a 40 x 60-foot clubhouse (now called La Cantina) for a cost of approximately \$70,000. (8) It was completed in 1981. (9) At the July 19, 1984, meeting of the SWFC, a proposal to approve a bid of \$18,000 to build a clubhouse addition was passed. (10)

In 2008 a Ramada was built over the Beer Garden at a cost of \$276,000. It has been useful for a variety of events from dog shows to barbeques. In early 2011, plans were made to undertake a major remodeling of the La Cantina. It is expected that this project would be completed by the end of the year.

SUMMARY OF FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

Thurber Hall-1971
Pima Hall-1971
Livestock Barn-1976
Main Stage-1978
Old Pueblo Hall-1978
Livestock Barn Ramada-1980
La Cantina 1981
La Cantina addition-1984
Beer Garden Cover-2008

DEVELOPMENT OF HOUGHTON ROAD PROPERTY AND FACILITIES UPDATES

Since the 2011 Centennial Celebration of the Pima County Fair, several large-scale improvements were made at the Pima County Fairgrounds. The Pima County Fairgrounds Master Plan was completed and adopted by the Southwestern Fair Commission (SWFC) Board in 2010 providing the direction necessary to identify and complete these key projects. Remodeling of the Cantina was completed in 2013 with a full kitchen for restaurant and catering use during the annual Fair. The kitchen is used for wedding receptions, private parties, horse shows and other special events based on requested catering needs.

Also in 2013, the main stage was removed and the Super Stage remodeled to allow concerts and performers to play from either direction of the stage surface. The result has allowed for increased spectator viewing from the Fair side and with a higher stage platform provides an unobstructed view of the performers from further distances. The Pima RV Park was completely redone in 2014 resulting in 44 new large RV spaces with 220 50-amp power. Over the past several years, asphalt has been applied to much of the internal areas of the fairgrounds that were dirt thus reducing dust during the annual Fair and special events.

In 2015 there was high anticipation for the November Bond Election, which ultimately failed, that if approved could have brought large scale improvements to the fairgrounds. Nonetheless, several capital improvements were approved, completed or underway including the new Tree Line RV Park, Carnival Midway Paving, 4-H RV Park Renovation, OP Hall Design and Maintenance Compound Design.

During the fiscal year 2015-2016, several projects were completed to improve operations and attract new business. The Tree Line RV Park located south of the main stage was improved to add 33 full hookup sites. This will help to accommodate more users during the Fair while providing a higher number of spaces for special events. Other projects completed during the year include additional swamp coolers added to a portion of the Livestock Barn, the addition of more asphalt to cover the remaining dirt areas in the middle of the carnival midway and an overhaul of the above ground portion of the Fairgrounds well pump system. Phone and internet infrastructure improvements were also made during the year.

During the fiscal year 2016-2017, the Southwestern Fair Commission took on two of the largest capital improvement projects ever in the history of the company. During this year approximately \$1.8 Million was spent on capital improvements. To capitalize on the recently identified business niche of RV Rallies, SWFC identified the need for large meeting rooms and additional full hook up RV sites. Approximately one-third of Old Pueblo Hall (18,000 square feet) was converted into 2 large meeting rooms, equipped with wall dividers that could further divide each large room into 2 separate rooms. In addition, the building was completely insulated, and new heating and cooling systems installed.

The outdated 4-H RV Park which included approximately 120 sites with water, some with basic power and no sewer was remodeled to include 108 sites with full hookups including 50-amp power. Currently, the fairgrounds feature several RV Park areas around the property totaling 370 full hook-up RV sites. Other projects during this period included the addition of more asphalt and internet infrastructure improvements.

Several new projects were approved at the June 2018 Board meeting to be included in the FY 2018-2019 budget. The Southwestern Fair Commission Board and Staff continue to follow the strategic direction identified in the Pima County Fairgrounds Master Plan adopted in 2011. A major emphasis in the plan is directed at improving and increasing RV Rally facilities and meeting rooms. During the fiscal year a new RV Office was constructed located on the north side of Pima Hall for site check-in. It is equipped with restrooms, showers, laundry and a small sales area with RV supplies and snacks. In addition, a new Propane Filling Station was built next to the new RV Office.

Several architectural design projects were developed to improve Manny's RV Park, including the construction of new RV spaces in front of Old Pueblo Hall and building a new 3,000 square foot storage and meeting space building next to the Main Stage.

The 2019-2020 Fiscal Year was truly one for the ages. Several capital projects were budgeted but only a few minor projects were completed due to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. A few IT projects were completed, including WIFI and Fiber improvements, in anticipation of the 2020 Pima County Fair. The main improvement, and extremely significant for future development of the Fairgrounds, was the connection of the Fairground's sewer system directly to the Pima County Wastewater system. SWFC was required to pay Pima County \$167,385 in wastewater connection fees.

The 2020-2021 Fiscal Year was during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic. No capital improvements were budgeted for by the SWFC or completed during this time frame. Interestingly, Pima County had received funding to begin the highly anticipated Houghton Road widening project from two lanes to four lanes. In addition, a new interchange project began that included the innovative cross-over design and included four lanes as well.

The 2021-2022 Fiscal Year was another COVID-19 Pandemic restricted year. Once again, with the Fair being canceled, the SWFC did not budget for any capital improvement projects. The Houghton Road widening project continued to make progress and the further

development of the North Channel designed and overseen by Pima County Flood Control began to take shape. The channel runs parallel to Brekke Road extending from the Tucson Dragway to Harrison Road with a segment of the Huckelberry Loop bike trail along the western edge from the Brekke Road entrance to the Fairgrounds.

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 was a banner year due to the return of the Fair after a 2-year hiatus. With the additional revenues SWFC purchased several pieces of equipment including a new water truck, tractor, harrow, mini excavator and a laser device for leveling horse arenas and parking areas. In addition to the equipment, one large scale capital improvement project was completed which included paving the main Fair parking access road coming over the Dragstrip.

With the success of the 2022 Fair, in 2023-2024, the SWFC invested in several capital improvement projects and purchased more equipment to “catchup” from the Pandemic financial woes. Capital improvement projects and equipment purchases included: a new water truck, mini excavator, dump trailer, lawn mowers, event bathroom remodeling, new walk-in coolers and mini high lifts for use inside the exhibit buildings.

At the 2024 Board reception, it was announced that the ramada adjoining the Livestock Barn was being named the “Dr. Marvin and Patsy Selke Livestock Ramada”. This was done in recognition of their 60 years of dedicated volunteer service to the Pima County Fair. Not included in the original 2011 History report was the fact that another part of the livestock facilities, that originally was called the West Arena, was renamed “Manny’s Arena” after Arturo Manuel Nunez. He had been the Maintenance Foreman and longtime employee who passed on March 10, 2001.

CITATIONS

1. Godfrey, Kathryn M. Fairgrounds Result Of Sharp Bargaining. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 12 July 1971: 19.
2. Thurber, H. B., President and Chairman of the Board, Southern Arizona International Livestock Association, Inc. and Pima County Fair. Two Letters and Enclosures to Pima County Board of Supervisors (found in SAILA files). 17 April 1972.
3. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 19 December 1975: 4-6.
4. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 23 March 1976: 1.
5. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 18 February 1977: 2.
6. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 20 December, 1977: 3.
7. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 27 May 1980: 1.
8. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 9 December 1980: 2.
9. Expansion: 600 acres added during fair history. Advertising supplement to *The Arizona Daily Star*. 10 April 1981: 5.
10. Southwestern fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 19 July 1984: 2.

ADMISSION, ATTENDANCE AND BUDGETS

It was reported that on Wednesday, the opening day of the first fair in 1911, that the gate receipts were about \$500, which meant the sale of 2000 tickets. (1) An article in the Tucson Citizen on the last day of the fair indicated that it had been a success financially. The expenses for the fair were about \$1200. Up to that time more than \$1000 had been taken in at the gate in spite of disagreeable weather. It was expected that the rush of people to the fair that night would make up the \$1200 total. (2) -----

Information on admission charges and transportation to the March 1915 fair as stated in the program and premium list were as follows: (3)

Admission at gate... ..50 cents
Children under 12 years.....25 cents
Grandstand.....25 cents
(Except on Saturday the 20th) 50 cents
Autos (including parking space)..... \$1.00
Rigs..... 50 cents

The El Paso and Southwestern Railroad will run trains to the grounds, leaving their depot at foot of Congress Street as follows: 9 a.m.; 11 a.m.; 12 noon; 1 p.m.

ROUND TRIP FARE 25 CENTS

Prior to the November 1915 fair, the Board of Supervisors appropriated \$5,000 for use by the Southern Arizona Fair Association. The money was to be used to defray the current expenses of the show. (4)

Admission for the 1948 fair was only 15 cents. (5)

In 1951, the fair was admission-free except for the nightly jalopy race finals and stage entertainment. These could be viewed from the grandstand from 8 p.m. on for a charge of 50 cents. According to John Dayton, the fair commission chairman, the Pima County Fair does not attempt to make money although they do manage to break even on the event. He stated that "the primary aim is to promote Four-H club and school activities and to encourage interest in the various fields represented". (6)

In 1955, Gov. Ernest McFarland presented a check for \$10,000 to the Pima County Fair Committee. This money was from the governor's account and came from the state's share of pari-mutuel receipts from Arizona horse and dog racing tracks. J. O. Niemann, chairman of the Fair Committee, accepted the check and stated that "As far as I know, this is the first assistance check to Pima County from the governor's account. I also believe it is one of the largest presented to any county for this purpose". The money was to be used for the Pima County Fair, a horse and livestock show in March and the annual congress of the National Hereford Breeders Assn. which was to meet in Tucson the following April. The \$10,000 supplemented approximately \$13,500 reserved for the fair by the County Board of Supervisors. Divisions of the fair supported by the budget include the fine arts, home arts, manual arts, photography, poultry, rabbits, pigeons, and livestock. (7)

In 1955, the gross revenue for the fair was up 30%. Revenue from the fair exhibits and the circus and carnival concessions was \$7,000, with the biggest increase from the carnival. The Siebrand Brothers shows paid a commission of \$2,600 for 1954 while in 1955 the fair's commission from them was \$4,100. That year's attendance was estimated at 75,000. (8) J. O. Niemann, fair commission chairman, estimated that 85,000 people attended the four-day 1956 fair. (9)

Attendance at the 1958 Pima County Fair was estimated to be 95,000, an all-time record. This was an estimate made by J. O. Niemann, fair commission chairman. No exact attendance figure was possible since there was no admission charge. However, parking was a real problem with "people parked everywhere without regard for fire and traffic lanes". (10)

Admission to the 1963 fair was 75 cents for adults and 25 cents for children and parking was free. (11) For the 1975 fair, admission tickets for adults were \$1.50 and 75 cents for children under 12. (12)

According to a memo to the Pima County Fair Committee from the Finance Department

of the Pima County Government Center the following amounts were available for the operation of the 1975 Pima County Fair: Grant-in Aid-Governor's Fund:

\$48,980, Parks and Recreation Department Budget: \$15,000, Estimated Receipts-Fair Operation: \$137,353 for a Total Estimated Operating Budget of \$201,333. In addition, there was \$110,000 available for Capital Improvements in General Obligation Bonds. (13)

Attendance at the 1976 fair, lured by balmy weather, was reported to be 159,117 paid admissions. This was three times the number of fairgoers that showed up for the 1975 fair. That fair was "plagued by rain, bone-chilling cold and even a splash of snow". The 1976 attendance for the 6-day fair, however, didn't beat the record of 190,000 set in 1974. (14)

About 310,000 people attended the 1980 fair according to Paul Nicholson, executive director of the fair. Admission for the fair was \$2.50 for adults and \$1.50 for children. (15)

Attendance numbers reported at early fairs were often estimated and appear to have been somewhat exaggerated. Figures reported in more recent years are undoubtedly more accurate due to better records aided by computer systems. In 2001, attendance was slightly over 138,000. This included 2,334 "Seniors" and over 6000 soccer junior participants and accompanying adults. For the Centennial Celebration in 2011, total attendance was 275,062. These figures include those with 11 day passes for 4-H and other exhibitors as well as vendors and others with photo ID's. On the day when the Fair hosted Special Needs groups and their escorts, 3400 attended as guests of the Fair.

Admission prices have gradually increased over the years. For 2011, General Admission was \$8.00 (11 and over), Children's Admission (6-10) was \$2.00 and Toddlers (5 and under) were admitted free. Parking was \$5.00 with the exception of Discount Day when both admission and parking was \$2.00.

In recent years, the Southwestern Fair Commission has operated on budgeted revenues ranging from approximately \$4.3 million in 2001 to \$5.2 million in 2011. For 2011, 65% of the Commission's income was derived from the Pima County Fair, 21% from horse shows and the remainder from concerts and other interim events.

Essentially all of the Southwestern Fair Commission's funding is derived from the business endeavors which they conduct. No financial funding is received from Pima County and only \$88,000 in 2001 and \$120,000 in 2011 was received from the Arizona's "Governor's Fund". (16)

ADMISSION, ATTENDANCE AND BUDGETS UPDATES

Saturday, April 28, 2012, with the draw of Ted Nugent, the Fair had its best day ever, based on total revenue. On the last Saturday of the 2013 Fair, with the Easton Corbin concert being the main attraction, total revenue again hit an all-time high. Traffic problems that night, getting vehicles in and out of the fairgrounds, triggered some major changes since then to enhance the flow of traffic. Thursday, April 24, 2014, wasn't far

behind and became the third biggest day at the Fair. It is believed that the hip hop movement drove attendance. In concert YG and Kid Ink combined with a wrist band night promotion. Saturday, April 25, 2015, easily became the new biggest day ever at the Pima County Fair based on total revenue. The rodeo, timing and weather made a perfect combination for a stellar turnout.

Over the 2011-2015 period, the number of people attending the Fair with Paid General Admission tickets increased by 10.6 %. Overall Fair revenue increased by nearly 23% during this same time period. In spite of a downturn in the economy, this was a trend that had been going on for the previous five years. It is believed that some people were going

to the Fair as a “stay-cation” rather than taking trips that involve more extensive travel. More concerts were also added during this time period.

In 2015, a total of 234,742 ticketed people attended the fair but this does not include 6,774 who had Exhibitor, 4-H or Photo ID passes and consequently were at the fair on multiple days. In 2015, youth ticket prices were increased to \$4.00 with General Admission tickets remaining at \$8.00, the same as they had been since 2011.

The growth at the Fair that has been occurring over recent years continued in 2016. All categories of revenue: Gate, Parking, Beer, Carnival and Concessions/Vendors all showed increases over 2015 with the Total Income up 5.1%. Total admissions were 245,900, up 4.8% over the previous year. This does not include 6556 with Exhibitor, 4H and Photo ID passes who attended on multiple days.

The 2017 Fair again set a new high with Total Receipts up 1.8% over the previous year. This total was also 86% greater than the Fair held 10 years ago in 2007. The largest gains were made in Gate Receipts, Carnival Revenue and Parking. There was a slight decline in Beer Sales and Concessions/Vendor income. The first Saturday night of the Fair, with Josh Turner in concert, was the best day that the Fair has ever had, based on total attendance and income.

In 2018 the Pima County Fair increased admission from \$8.00 - \$9.00 for adults and to \$5.00 for children 6-10 years of age. A Military Discount was changed from a one-day discount to \$5.00 admission, any day of the fair, with any Military ID. Concerts were included in the admission price. A limited number of upgraded seats could be purchased for an additional \$15.00. These upgrades were available for purchase only at the Pima County Fair Main Stage Beer Garden to create a sense of urgency and in most cases, a 2nd visit to the fair by the purchaser.

On the second Thursday night of the Fair, there was a huge backup of traffic with cars on the freeway backed up all the way to the Triple T Truck Stop. By shortly after 8:00 pm, two of the three lots were full restricting entry to a single gate. The draw for the night’s concert, JaRule & Ashanti, and the closing of schools that day in Pima County for the Red 4 Ed protests, making it likely more young families decided to come to the Fair that evening probably contributed to one of the worst traffic jams coming into the Fair that has ever occurred.

The 2019 Pima County Fair added an online admission and parking purchase option. Also added as an online option was the ability to purchase tickets to the Beerfest, Saturday, April 20th as well as to the newly added Rodeo VIP Seating Section, Saturday & Sunday, April 27 and 28th. The price of admission to the VIP Section was \$15.00 and included shade, beer tasting and food sampling, plus the chance to win door prizes. The VIP Section was 21 and over.

Because of the Covid-19 concerns, no Fairs were held in 2020 and 2021.

The 2022 Pima County Fair continued the online admission and concert admission from 2019 but discontinued the online parking purchase option. Due to staffing shortages, the Fair did not host a Beerfest nor rodeo VIP section, therefore those tickets from 2019 were not available to purchase. Admission price was increased by \$1.00 from the 2019 fair, from \$9.00 to \$10.00 for GA. Operation admission hours were shortened by one hour to open at 3:00 p.m. on the weekdays and 11:00 a.m. on the weekends.

Houghton Rd. south of I/10 past Dawn Rd. was under construction during the Fair, which also made Brekke Rd. inaccessible from Houghton. There was much concern about Fair traffic leading up to the Fair and a marketing plan was written and communicated to the public via Pima County. The months of planning leading up to the Fair with the Pima County

Department of Transportation, Pima County Sheriff's Department, Borderland Construction and Fair staff, made Fair ingress and egress the smoothest it has been without a single complaint about traffic. Definitely a Fair first!

More than likely, because there hadn't been a Fair the past two years, there was a lot of enthusiasm from the public to get back to the Fair again. As a result, the Fair ended up being the highest attended and highest grossing Fair in its history. All 2023 concerts and performances were included in the cost of Fair admission. VIP upgrades were \$20.00 and were only available to purchase online.

The 2024 Fair was a record-breaking event in several areas with an attendance of 294,046 which was a 10.1% increase over the previous year. Special Needs Day served 1794 disabled persons, up 555 people. The Pima County Fair Food Drive collected 17,842 pounds of non-perishable food which was estimated to produce over 7000 meals for the community.

Easter Sunday fell on the first weekend of the 2025 Fair which resulted in a rather slow start to the Fair. Total attendance and revenues were down somewhat from the previous two years but still very good. The only area that showed a growth over the previous year was Concessions/Vendors income which grew by 10.2%. Admission prices for the Fair were Adults: \$12.00, Children ages 6-10: \$7.00 and \$8.00 for Military and Seniors. Public Fair parking was \$8.00. Adding extra entrance lanes to the parking lots expedited the flow of incoming and exiting traffic. Admission gates added kiosk ticket locations to expedite ingress to the Fairgrounds and reduce staffing constraints for the first time.

CITATIONS

1. BIG CROWDS ARE ATTENDING PIMA FAIR. *The Tucson Citizen*. 26 October 1911: 2
2. PIMA COUNTY'S FIRST ANNUAL FAIR WILL BE BROUGHT TO CLOSE AT ELYSIAN GROVE TONIGHT. *The Tucson Citizen*. 28 October 1911: 1.
3. PROGRAM and PREMIUM LIST (found at the University of Arizona Library-Special Collections). *Third Annual Southern Arizona Fair*. 1915: 4.
4. FAIR WILL START ON THURSDAY WITH BIG EVENTS. *The Tucson Citizen*. 3 November 1915: 1.
5. PIMA COUNTY FAIR advertisement. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 10 February 1948: 8.
6. Pima County's Fair Will Open Thursday; Program Complete. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 16 October 1951: 5.
7. M'Farland Gives \$10,000 To Pima Fair Committee. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 18 October 1955: B1.
8. Fair Revenue Is Up 30 Per Cent. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 26 October 1955: B2.
9. Pima Fair Host To 85,000. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 29 October 1956: B4. 24
10. Fair Attendance Set at 95,000. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 20 October 1958: 26
11. PIMA COUNTY FAIR and SAILA advertisement. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 13 March 1963: B3.
12. Doug Kershaw To Lead Entertainers As Fair Opens Wednesday. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 24 March 1975: B1.
13. Finance Department, Pima County Governmental Center. Memo to Pima County Fair Committee. 25 September 1974.
14. Pima Fairgoers Nearly Tripled '75 Attendance. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 27 April 1976: B1.
15. Fair drew 310,000. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 21 April 1980: A3.
16. Lopez, Bryon. Chief Financial Officer-Southwestern Fair Commission. Personal recollections. 2011.

EXHIBITS AT THE FAIRS

The Pavilion at Elysian Grove was the center of attention at the first Pima County Fair in 1911. It was divided into spaces for the various departments: agricultural and horticultural, mining, home industries, school exhibits, women's department, etc. The mining companies were well represented with specimens of many ore combinations. Exhibits of vegetables, fruits and grains grown by experimental processes on the University farms received much favorable comment. The agriculture department was considered one of the best because of the quality of their exhibits from farms in the Santa Cruz and Rillito valleys. (1)

Of interest in the university section was a wireless telegraphy apparatus which was shown as in operation. A number of pictures taken by the department of astronomy were shown. The engineering department displayed transits, levels, and specimens of drafting.

There was also a display of old books dealing with pioneer Arizona life and history. The women's department, with its exhibits of culinary skills, art crafts and needle work, was a center of attraction for the feminine contingent at the fair. (2)

Upon entering the Pavilion, the first noticeable display was the "immense and beautiful display of Albert Steinfeld and Co.". It contained a leather sofa covered with pillows, set with a desk table in dark wood with matching chairs lighted with canopied electric lights. The room was decorated with items to make it look very homelike. Several figures dressed in the latest in the "way of women's wear from top to toe". (3)

Other merchants displayed a variety of household items. The ladies behind one counter told the story of good flour made in Tucson by the Eagle Milling Co., of good coffee toasted in Tucson by the Pagoda Tea and Coffee Co., and of the Charter Oak stove which everyone who ever used it praises as a fuel saver and heat-producer sold in Tucson by the W. A. Julian Co. According to reports, "the poultry show is fine and twice as much livestock has come in as had been provided for". (3) The Flowing Wells Dairy won all the prizes in the dairy class and Gus Marvin won all prizes in the apiary class. (4)

Dogs, poultry, cattle and horses all had good exhibits at the 1912 fair. (5) However, a number of classes found in the premium list for the Second Annual Southern Arizona Fair in 1912 are interesting and may seem unique today but were undoubtedly appropriate for that time period. In the Agriculture and Horticulture Department there were classes for: Sheaf Barley, Broom Corn, Half bushel of Sweet Potatoes, pint jar ripe pickled Olives, Largest Watermelon, One Quart Cream, and half dozen sections of Comb Honey. In the Education Department, Themes and stories (Freshmen), Specimen copies of stenographic work, Penmanship, Hemstitching, White bread and Basket weaving could all be entered. (6)

The Tucson Poultry Association had a very successful show at the Southern Arizona Fair in 1915. There were 375 birds entered which was the largest show ever held in Tucson. M. J. Gotthelf's Barred Rock hen was awarded the silver loving cup as the best bird in the show. (7)

An unusual contest was held at the 1916 fair. It was called the Better Babies Contest. The object as stated in the premium list was stated as follows:

"The Better Babies' Contest is a popular yet scientific movement to insure better babies and a better race. It consists of entering, examining and awarding prizes to children 6 months to 18 months of age on exactly the same basis or principles that are applied to livestock shows. Mere beauty does not count. Physical and mental development only are considered. The Better Babies' Contest ensures a better race of Americans, because it

teaches parents how to improve the physical condition of children already born and to protect those yet unborn. It rouses interest in conservation of child life and health and in all forms of child welfare. It forges a connecting link between parents and teachers, between the home and the scientific study of child life. It promotes civic interest in children of the community, their schools and their relations.” (8)

The Pima County Mid-Winter Fair and Rodeo in 1929 was held on the grounds of the Santa Catalina Polo Association. (9) The exhibits were housed in two large tents, 100 by 200 feet. Corrals and pens were provided for livestock. (10)

Facing Campbell Avenue was the industrial and automotive display tent. Eleven makes of cars composed the automotive display. In addition to the more commonly known makes of American made automobiles produced at that time were the De Sota Six, Durant, Studebaker Erskine, Hupmobile, and the Willys Knight Whippet. (9)

A number of mining companies were represented. The New Cornelius Mining Company of Ajo featured a 50-pound piece of copper ore fashioned in the form of a turtle. There were samples of silver ore from the La Aribac mine in the Baboquivari district. This mine, discovered in 1824, is recorded as the oldest mine in Pima County. (9)

Another exhibit of the Electrical Equipment company featured the Atwater-Kent radio. The Tucson Gas and Electric company displayed electric refrigerators, gas ranges and Rund heaters. The Catalina Council, Boy Scouts of America, had a display as well as maintaining a first aid station at the fair. Other displays of machinery, school exhibits, 4-H home science entries, vegetables, poultry and livestock were present. (9)

A dog show, sponsored by the recently organized Catalina Kennel Club, was held at the 1929 fair. It was the first show for the club sanctioned by the American Kennel Club. (11) A Shepherd entry of J. Prugh Herndon took first in class and sweepstakes of the show. (12)

The first reference to 4-H exhibits at a fair in Pima County was found in an article prior to the 1929 fair. Exhibits for the 4-H cooking and sewing class were being collected and more than 20 communities were expected to participate. One of the objectives stated was “to show the public that there really is someone living on the desert”. (13)

At the 1938 fair, of note was the charity exhibit of “Big Jim” a 3,320-pound steer that the late Will Rogers, famed western movie and stage comedian, raised for a pet. Big Jim stood 16 hands high and was 11 feet, six inches in girth and according to the Star article was “somewhere between the Valley Bank building and the courthouse in size”. (14)

In their first post-war exhibit at the 1948 Pima County Fair, the Papago Indians from the Sells Reservation (Tohono O’odham Nation) offered a notable display of Indian arts and crafts. Baskets and pottery, for which the Papago are noted as well as modern household adaptations of these utensils, were demonstrated in the exhibit. Harness making, braiding of horsehair, and the use of buck and deer skins for clothing were also part of the display. (15)

At the 1949 fair, a cutaway airplane engine was featured in the Davis-Monthan air force base display while a General Sherman tank rumbled out the merits of the National Guard. Pies and cakes, pumpkins and plows, cotton and colored photographs filled the north Quonset. Three bales of cotton from Marana, cut and exposed for judging climaxed the seed-to-plant-to-market exhibit of one of Arizona’s leading products. (16)

Two jet aircraft, an F-84 Thunderjet and a B-45 Toronado bomber were sent by the Air Force from California and were on display at the 1951 Fair. (17) More than 116 paintings, sculptures and other works of art by Pima County artists formed a new exhibit sponsored

by the Tucson Fine Art Association. (18)

Occupying one of the main Quonset buildings at the 1955 fair, the home economics exhibit included more than 600 fancy food items as well as a thousand other exhibits such as clothing, toys, needlework and many other homemade items. Hundreds of jars of jelly, jams, preserves, pickles and the like sparkled on the shelves while in the brand-new exhibition cases were “delectable looking cookies, cakes and pies”. (19)

An Atoms for Peace exhibit was on display at the 1956 fair. The exhibit came from the American Museum of Atomic Energy at Oak Ridge, Tenn. It was designed primarily to acquaint students and the public with what is being done to harness the atom for peacetime uses. (20) Occupying a place of honor in the main exhibit building was a 12 by 20-foot exhibit depicting the history of cotton from 785 A.D. to the present time. It was made entirely of seeds. (21)

In the Quonset hut at the 1965 fair, eight Pima County school districts displayed exhibits on the theme “Changing World-Changing Education”. (22)

No, Elvis was never at the fair, but “Elvis: The Private Collection” was there in 1996. It was billed as one of the largest gatherings of Elvis Presley memorabilia in the world. You could have seen originals and reproductions of his glitzy stage costumes and musical instruments that he owned. There were also his boxing gloves, his Kenpo (karate) card and an original poster of almost every movie that he made plus performance photos and videos covering his career. You could also walk inside the Formica-encrusted 1962 Dodge motor home used during his films as an onsite dressing room. (23)

J. B. Holdren, also known as Bardo the Clown, was the official clown at the Kansas State Fair for 65 years. He was a master craftsman, show painter, artist, carver and entertainer. After deciding that the Kansas winters were too hard on him, he made the Pima County Fairgrounds his winter home for a number of years thru 2002. While there, he painted many of the show signs for the fair. A large number of the signs that he painted are still in use today, directing fairgoers to the various exhibits and venues. He can be remembered by many for the carousel horses that he carved, painted and sold at the fair. (24)

The Home Arts/Fine Arts Departments and Contests and Competitions entries, with their displays in Old Pueblo Hall, have had many changes throughout the years. Unfortunately, most of the information regarding entries has disappeared over time. Carol Elmer managed the entries from 1995 to 2000. Betty Drayer was in charge of the entries for 2001. After that year, Jon Baker, the Executive Director of the Southwestern Fair Commission, wanted to bring the entries for those departments in Old Pueblo under the control of the full-time employees.

Peggy Bauernfeind started managing Old Pueblo Hall and all their entries into the fair in 2002. Files from entries from previous fairs had been destroyed which made it necessary to start from scratch. Peggy was able to contact a couple of people who had previously worked in the building, and they gave names of other volunteers who they had worked with and it continued from there. In 2002, there were a total of 1,104 entries. Since that year, with hard work, the number of entries has continued to grow. From 2001 through 2009 there was an average increase of 15% a year. In 2010, the increase was 49% with 4,146 entries.

Working with local teachers, categories were found that were inexpensive and that made it fairly easy for students to participate. Some of the fun things that have been done with the themes for entries in the Contests division have been decorated shoes, salads, scratch pies, a decorated rock, a decorated bird house and cookies on a decorated plate.

The theme for this category in 2011 was “Holiday Tree Ornaments”. There were five trees donated on which the ornaments were hung. Entries were down somewhat, possibly because of the weak economy.

The Fair Commission took a big step in 2011 by not printing the Premium Book. All entries were done online. Even with this new way of exhibitors making their entries, it worked out well.

One other activity for the public to participate in was a “Recycling Table” where people could create anything their imagination allowed from donated recyclable items. Grandparents, parents and children of all ages made a grand array of items. Many of the people took their recycled creations with them but others chose to leave their artwork on display for the public.

In the Fine Arts Department, a different theme is used each year. The idea is to always have a subject pertaining to Southern Arizona, or which is fair related. Some of the themes for the Fine Arts entries have been Saguaro Cactus (2002), Arizona Sunsets (2003), Old West History (2006), Animals/Reptiles of Southern Arizona (2007) and Breathtaking Views of Southern Arizona’s Majestic Mountains (2010). The theme for 2011 was Faces of the Fair. Since it was the fair’s Centennial Celebration, it was decided to celebrate by having faces of all of the fun at the Pima County Fair. (25)

EXHIBITS AT THE FAIRS UPDATES

The theme for the Fine Arts display in 2012 was “100 Years of Arizona History” with 58 entries in that category. This tied in with the centennial celebration of the state of Arizona. Included were several items on loan from the Arizona Historical Museum in Tucson. Also, this year, a wall of pictures from past fairs was on display in Old Pueblo Hall.

In 2013, the pictures of the Pima County Fair Hall of Fame recipients were displayed in Old Pueblo Hall for the first time. The Fair History display also included information about J. B. Holdren (known as Bardo the Clown) who was the artist and sign painter at the Pima County Fair for over twenty years. The theme for the Fine Arts display was “Arizona Sunrises and Sunsets”.

The agriculture display and the interactive science center received nice reviews and were busy throughout the fair. The recycling table was a big hit this year. The students were able to work on making something out of the various materials provided at no cost to them. They could then display their project or take it home with them.

Overall entries were up again in 2014 for the third year in a row. With the Western Fairs Association visiting our fair this year, many from that group spent time in Old Pueblo Hall asking questions and talking about fair entries. The Fine Arts theme was “Cowboy up Arizona”.

School entries were down in 2015 because two of the larger schools that previously had entries no longer have an art teacher. However, there were lots of clothing entries that made up a special display. As in the past there was a large display of quilts. The Fine Arts theme was “The Five (5) C’s of Arizona”: Copper, Cattle, Cotton, Citrus and Climate.

The theme for Fine Arts in 2016 was “Wonders of the Desert”. There were 78 themed entries compared to last year’s total of 27. The setup of the theme was laid out beautifully. The fairgrounds borrowed a coyote and rattlesnake from the International Wildlife Museum for our display. A different theme will continue every year with the theme for the year 2017 being “Southwestern Transportation”.

The biggest project this year was the Diversity Project. It was set up for guests to walk through and enjoy the Diversity's of life. It was displayed in Old Pueblo Hall with a museum like feel to it. The Southwestern Fair Commission will be upgrading the Old Pueblo Hall this summer and at this time having another project like this one in the future is undetermined.

This year the total entries for Fine Arts and Home Arts came out to 3,013 which were down by 374 entries from last year due to less schools entering. For next year the SWFC hopes to educate our school districts early enough in August for an increase in school participation.

This year's contest was a Star Wars Ballot Box. The contest started in February and ended at the beginning of March. The contest was posted on social media and the Pima County Fair Website. The outcome of the entries received was not what was expected but a contest will continue each year in Old Pueblo Hall.

The 2017 Pima County Fair was the first year that Exhibits were displayed in the newly remodeled Old Pueblo Hall, with a name change to the Old Pueblo Conference and Event Center in 2016. The building attracted over 450 more entries than last year and was overall a huge success during the Fair. With the newly added Conference Rooms, 13 display cases were updated with information and props pertaining to Tucson Attractions, Pima County Southeast Regional Park, Tucson Dragway, 4-H, Premium Books, Centennial Celebration, The Fair-Where and When, Pima County Fair T-Shirt Quilt, Fair History, Fair Concerts and RCS Carnival antiques.

Remembering Our Fallen was also another great contribution to the building while families and the public could view photos of our fallen soldiers. The theme for Fine Arts at the 2018 Fair will be "Ghost Towns". Information concerning entries is available at www.pimacountyfair.com. Home Arts will be displaying the 2018 Pallet Contests winners next year with great hope of another successful year. 2018 Exhibits

The 2018 Fair Exhibits came to life in an entirely different way this year allowing each Entry department to have its own theme. The themes were set up in each department identifying them with props, signage and displays. The theme for Fine Arts was Ghost Towns, Home Arts was Retro, and Student Art was Jumanji. Creating a theme identified each department as its own and the fairgoers enjoyed it.

On the other end of the Old Pueblo Conference and Event center, the exhibit Farmer Jon was set up with Educational Agricultural hands-on displays giving it a much newer look. It was brought to life with added live worms and composting guides, live cotton, interactive corn painting, Moo U videos, Maggie the Milking Cow, Sheep Wool and much more. The building also displayed new exhibits such as the Master Gardeners, Mission Garden and Southern Arizona Beekeepers. The efforts of adding themes and new exhibits will continue each year to improve the building attracting fairgoers and hopefully increasing Entries.

The Fair Exhibits for 2019 were unique in their own way drawing attention to each exhibit that displayed its very own theme. The theme for Fine Art was "Classic Cars" which displayed a 1970 Plymouth Oldsmobile in the center of the room for fairgoers to admire. The theme for Home Arts was "Rave and Crave Vintage" displaying beautifully handcrafted bicycle rims with antique like flowers around them. The theme for Student art was "Bounce into Spring" which had a vibrant handcrafted honeycomb hanging from the ceiling drawing attention right as you came through the door. These themes throughout the building gave the entry departments their very own identity leaving the imagination to the mind.

Another great addition to the Old Pueblo Conference and Event Center was the S.T.E.A.M. Trail Activity Passport Booklet. This was created by Julia Heavner, the Competitive Entries

Manager, with guided help from Alpha Graphics. The book allowed school age children to visit Critical Thinking Centers that educated them on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art/Agricultural and Mathematics throughout the 4-H barn and the Old Pueblo Conference and Event Center. It was a huge hit for teachers and students who preregistered for a fieldtrip day. It will be offered again next year and will continue to educate school-aged children and future fairgoers.

The Fair Exhibits for 2022 were down significantly from the year 2019. This didn't come as a surprise as this was the first Pima County Fair since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. For this reason, the exhibits were displayed differently throughout the Old Pueblo Conference and Event Center. The theme for Fine Arts was "Murals throughout Arizona" which displayed a beautiful green 1928 Allis Chalmers Tractor courtesy of Jeff Eppley. The Student Art Exhibits and Home Art Exhibits were displayed next to each allowing fairgoers to enjoy both themes in an unusual and unique way at the same time. The theme for Student Art was "Under the Sea" and meshed nicely into the Home Arts theme "Rustic Country", believe it or not they complemented each other.

Displayed inside Home Arts as part of the theme were two tailgate benches from a 1964 Chevy step side truck handcrafted by Frank Garcia. He is a very talented employee of the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. and makes almost every piece of art for the upcoming Fine Art, Student Art, and Home Art themes each year. The rustic and antique appearance of both pieces of art beautifully accented the "Rustic Country" theme. Many fairgoers were intrigued by both masterpieces, even adding them to their social media page for outside viewers to see. It was great to see a diversity of families taking pictures on the tailgate bench(s) without having to social distance themselves from each other.

Finally, we can't forget the building was filled with many demonstrators who return year after year. Here are just a few memorable names, Southern Arizona Beekeepers Association, Tucson Garden Railway Society, Southwest Woodcarvers, and the Old Pueblo Lapidary Club. These demonstrators shouldn't go unnoticed as they not only volunteer their time but devote long hours to educate fairgoers about their passionate hobby and club. It may not have been a number breaking year in Exhibits, but it was by far a Fair that will never be forgotten.

The 2023 Pima County Fair had another successful year. With nearly 800 new entries from the year prior, the competitive exhibits at the fair were a resounding success. This was great news as it demonstrates growing interest and participation in the arts among the local community and provides an opportunity for residents to showcase their talent, creativity, and hard work. The rise in the student art projects is particularly noteworthy as it highlights the importance of art education. Themes this year were Word Art, Arizona Monsoons and Arizona Cactus Oasis.

Attendance for school field trips has increased this year when compared to previous years. Teachers have shown great interest in our educational STEAM trail program specifically designed for elementary school-aged students. The STEAM trail offers an interactive and fun experience for students to learn about science, technology, engineering, agriculture/art, and mathematics, while the Farmer Jon agriculture exhibit teaches students about farming techniques, crop production, and the importance of agriculture in our society. These exhibits have been specifically tailored to meet the learning needs of elementary school-aged children and provide them with a hands-on learning experience that will stay with them for a lifetime.

We are thrilled to see educators recognizing the value of our exhibits and hope to continue to expand our offerings in the future. As always, demonstrators, with their many displays, have shown an unwavering dedication to the school field trip program as well.

The 2024 Pima County Fair was a success, featuring a significant increase in

competitive exhibits and diverse themes. With a focus on celebrating Arizona's unique essence, participants across various departments showcased their talents and creativity.

In the Home Arts department, the theme "Desert Wildflowers" captured Arizona's vibrant natural beauty. Exhibitors displayed their skills in crafts, cooking, and photography, reflecting the colors and textures of desert. Additionally, the "Arizona's Love of Honey" contest in the Home Arts department likely inspired a sweetness of culinary entries, celebrating the state's tradition of beekeeping and honey production. From honey-based recipes to educational displays about bees, participants showcased their creativity and passion for this delightful ingredient.

The Fine Arts department explored the theme "Birds of the Arizona Sky." Artists used various mediums, painting, sculpture, and photography to depict the diverse species of birds inhabiting Arizona's skies.

The Creative Hands Contest provided a platform for teachers and young artists to showcase their imagination and skills, friendly competition and creativity.

The Fair saw a record-breaking attendance of school field trips, which indicated the growing interest in experiential learning. The STEAM Trail activity booklet integrated science, technology, engineering, arts, agriculture and mathematics, offering hands-on exploration for students of all ages.

The newest exhibit this year was the Mobile Dairy Classroom, housed inside the Old Pueblo Hall building. Visitors experienced live demonstrations on dairy farming, learned about milk production, and appreciated the vital role of dairy farmers.

In summary, the Pima County Fair celebrated creativity, education, and Arizona's natural and cultural heritage, leaving a lasting impression on attendees and participants. The Mobile Dairy Classroom enriched the fair's educational offerings, providing an immersive experience related to dairy farming and milk production.

The 2025 Pima County Fair saw a small drop in overall entries, about 200 fewer than last year. We're chalking it up to the economy and other unknown factors, but we're still proud of the great participation we had.

This year's themes made things fun and creative across all departments. The Home Arts theme was "Cow and Goat Lovers of Arizona," and we added a Farm-to-Table Decorating Contest that was a big hit. The Fine Arts department went with "Sunset on the Range: The Life of Cowboys and Cowgirls," and the entries really captured that western vibe through paintings, drawings, and other artwork.

The Student Art Exhibit had a Farm-Themed Art Extravaganza, along with our usual Egg Art and Coloring Contest, which always brings in some fun and colorful entries from kids of all ages.

School field trips were once again a highlight, with over 800 students and 100 chaperones attending one Friday of the Fair. Most participants engaged with the STEAM Trail Activity Booklet, combining hands-on learning across science, technology, engineering, art, and agriculture. Participation remained high, although about one-third of the older students, mostly high schoolers, opted out.

Even though the Mobile Dairy Classroom couldn't make it back this year, the Old Pueblo Hall still had a great setup. We had a train cart and roller coaster cart brought in by Jeff Eppley, one of last year's Hall of Fame inductees. Plus, Earhart helped us fill the space with a great display of tractors and side-by-sides for sale.

Even with a few challenges, 2025 still brought out creativity, community, and a lot of fun. We're looking forward to what next year brings!

CITATIONS

1. LARGE CROWDS ATTEND OPENING OF THE PIMA COUNTY FAIR. *The Tucson Citizen*. 25 October 1911: 5.
2. ATTRACTIVE EXHIBITS IN ALL DEPARTMENTS OF PIMA COUNTY FAIR ARE DRAWING BIG CROWDS. *The Tucson Citizen*. 26 October 1911: 1.

3. PIMA COUNTY FAIR OPENS TO A BIG CROWD. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 26 October 1911: 1 & 4.
4. PIMA COUNTY'S FIRST ANNUAL FAIR WILL BE BROUGHT TO CLOSE AT ELYSIAN GROVE TONIGHT. *The Tucson Citizen*. 28 October 1911: 1.
5. SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR OPENS THIS MORNING AT 9 O'CLOCK AT THE GROVE. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 17 October 1912: 8.
6. Premium List and Program (found at the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson-Library and Archives). SECOND ANNUAL SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR. 1912.
7. POULTRY SHOW IS FINEST HELD IN TUCSON. *The Tucson Citizen*. 20 March 1915: 2.
8. PROGRAM and Premium List (found at the University of Arizona Library-Special Collections). *Fourth Annual SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR*. 1916: 21 & 22.
9. Extensive Exhibits Feature Opening Day of Pima Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 22 February 1929: 1 & 6.
10. TWO TENTS TO HOUSE PIMA'S COUNTY FAIR. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 8 January 1929: 4.
11. FIRST DOG SHOW IN PIMA COUNTY. *The Arizona Daily Star-Rodeo Edition* Second Section. 22 February 1929: 5.
12. Winner of Sweepstakes. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 25 February 1929: 3.
13. 4-H EXHIBITS FOR FAIR COLLECTED. *Tucson Daily Citizen*. 5 February 1929: 2.
14. FAIR EXHIBITS OPENED TODAY. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 19 February 1938: B.
15. Papagos Return Arts-Crafts Exhibit to Post-War Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 15 February 1948: A16.
16. Many Exhibits Mark Opening Of Annual Pima County Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 26 October 1949: A2.
17. Pima County's Fair Will Open Thursday; Program Complete. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 16 October 1951: 5.
18. County Fair Opening Today; Races Highlighting Program. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 18 October 1951: A4.
19. Pima County's Fair Opens Today. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 20 October 1955: A1.
20. Atoms For Peace Is County Fair Exhibit. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 7 October 1956: A7.
21. Variety Keynote Of County Fair Attractions. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 26 October 1956: B1.
22. Brother, Sister Claim Lion's Share Of Prizes. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 25 March 1965: B1.
23. Elvis sighting. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 5 April 1996: D14.
24. Clown does a fair job of painting. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 5 April 1996: B1.
25. Bauernfeind, Peggy. Executive Secretary-Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Personal recollections. 2011.

ENTERTAINMENT AND SPECIAL EVENTS AT THE FAIRS

The decoration of the Elysian Grove pavilion for the Fair in 1911 was described as elaborate. Flags and bunting used in the Cinco de Mayo celebration as well as the street flags from ordinary celebrations were used. (1)

The "Phoenix high school" football team traveled by train to Tucson where they played

the “Tucson high school” team during the fair. Mayor I. E. Huffman, himself a former football star, refereed the game. (1) The Arizona Daily Star reported that “the varsity eleven (of Tucson) rather outclassed the eleven of the Phoenix high, as the score of 28 to nothing in favor of the former showed”. (2)

The Old Pueblo band played at the fair’s opening as well as at the football game. In the pavilion, an orchestra provided music. Opening day was also Children’s Day with the city schools all being closed. During the 15-minute intermission of the football game, potato and burro races were held for the boys and girls under 15. (3)

Officers and enlisted men of the Fourth United States Cavalry were guests of the fair board for the Southern Arizona Fair in 1912. The cavalry band gave concerts and the troopers gave exhibition drills. To show their appreciation, the fair board had the officers of the Fourth join them for a banquet at the Old Pueblo Club on Saturday night. (4) Rescue races were one of the events in which the cavalry participated. Corporal Darrow had the fastest time. Starting in front of the grandstand and riding bareback, he picked up his man and returned to the starting line covering about 250 yards in 20 ½ seconds. (5)

Various forms of racing were very much a part of the entertainment for the March, 1915 fair. A 100-mile automobile race, motorcycle races, harness racing and running races were all featured in the advertisement for the fair. Also listed was Thompson’s Aerial Thrills, The Two Hoyts, a Carnival and the State Tennis Championship. (6)

Katherine Stinson, billed as the “World’s Greatest Aviatrix (Aviatrix)”, was one of the featured attractions at the November 1915 fair. (7) She reportedly was the only aviatrix (woman pilot) to “attempt to loop the loop and fly upside down”. (8)

Providing a downtown evening attraction for the 1929 Fair and Rodeo visitors was “Wolfville”, entertainment depicting early mining days in Southwestern Arizona. The presentation was held at 81 North Sixth Avenue, under the direction of the Tucson Trades Council. “Big Hat” dances at the Blue Moon pavilion were sponsored by the Jaycees during the show. (9)

An Indian Day was a part of the La Fiesta de los Vaqueros held in conjunction with the fair during the 1930’s. In 1936, nearly 600 Indians from nearby reservations and scattered southern Arizona points made their annual trek to Tucson for the program of tribal dances, races, rodeo events and native games. The Papago Indian band from San Xavier also played during the program. (10)

There were a lot of musical groups providing entertainment at the 1949 fair. One of the featured groups was the Tucson Boys’ Choir. Weekday concerts were also given by bands from Tucson Jr. High, Mansfield, Catalina and Roskrige schools. (11)

During the 1960 Fair, Carrol Steger, a University of Arizona freshman was chosen as Miss Pima County for 1960. Carrol did an interpretive dance, “The Walter Winchell Rhumba” for the talent portion of the contest. (12)

Father Kino, builder of missions and the man who introduced cattle growing in Arizona, was the theme around which the Southern Arizona Livestock Show and the Pima County Fair was built in 1963. Money was raised at the fair-show to help pay for the memorial statue of Father Kino, as one of the two men representing Arizona, which was built and displayed in Washington, D.C. (13) A Hereford bull was auctioned off during the fair with the proceeds going toward payment of the statue. (14)

Entertainment at the 1963 Fair featured “Two Free Hollywood Stage Shows”. Heading the list of entertainers were The Osmond Brothers from the Andy Williams Show and Tex Beneke, of Glenn Miller fame, and his orchestra. (15) The 1964 fair had two free stage shows each day starring Jack Imel of the Lawrence Welk Show. Other entertainers were

musicians playing electric harmonicas, a juggler and acrobat team and a comedy act. The Miss Pima County pageant was also held. (16)

The finals of the Pima County Amateur Contest were held during the 1967 fair. A total of 15 singers, tap dancers, baton twirlers, guitar players and small combos competed. The winner and two runners-up were to represent Pima County at the State fair in Phoenix. The regular Hollywood stage show featured acts which had appeared on the Hollywood Palace and the Ed Sullivan television shows. (17)

At the 1970 fair, the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Band performed. Comprised of 40 musicians clad in traditional Marine Corps dress blues, the band ran the gamut from Beethoven to the Tijuana Brass and from Broadway show tunes to Sousa marches. (18)

Doug Kershaw, the "Ragun Cajun" fiddler highlighted the entertainment for the 1975 fair. Kershaw had recorded with numerous groups, including the rock quartet Grand Funk Railroad and the Boston Symphony. (19)

Governor Raul Castro was present at the 1976 fair for the dedication of the new livestock building. (20) Governor Castro was also recognized at that time for his role in securing the funding which made it possible to build it.

A "knowledgeable source" confirmed that Billy Carter, brother of President Jimmy Carter, was to be paid \$10,000 for his appearance at the 1977 Pima Town and Country fair. He joined Governor Castro at the opening of the fair. In addition, he was to "visit with fans, philosophize, mix and mingle" and give humorous talks at stage appearances.

He was the guest of honor at a barbequed beef and cole slaw lunch attended by Gov. Castro and other dignitaries. The lunch was held in a refurbished Quonset hut called the Exhibitor's Club. He also helped the governor choose the winner of the governor's award for the best painting entered at the fair. (21) (22)

Country singers David Frizzel and Shelly West appeared at the 1980 fair. Magician Bob Ford, a member of the London Magic Circle, also brought his illusion show to the fair. (23)

Albert A. Mallis was one of the original members of the Southwestern Fair Commission when it was formed in 1975. However, he was probably best known as the voice of the Pima County Fair, the master of ceremonies on the "big stage" and the announcer on the public address system, which for years was used to keep fair goers informed about the activities taking place at the fair. He was the entertainment coordinator for over 18 years and as a result was often referred to as "Mr. Entertainment". He took pride in the fact that he tried to make the fair a showplace for local entertainment. One year he touted the fact that the performers at the fair added up to 586 musicians, 993 dancers and 796 singers. (24)

Non-fair concerts have drawn good crowds to the fairgrounds over the years. Alabama, named the artist of the decade by the Academy of Country Music, appeared on November 25, 1990 with opening acts Suzy Bogguss and Clint Black. Alabama had sold over 40 million records and did not disappoint the crowd by "cranking out a slew of hit songs". However, the highlight of the evening was Clint Black. His music was honkytonk of the kind that can only be created by slide guitars and fiddles. It "was gritty, heartfelt Western swing, topped off by Black's terrific twang". Black thrilled the 7000 or so fans with songs from his first two albums, "Killin' Time" and "Put Yourself in My Shoes". (25)

An estimated crowd of 10,000 showed up for a Scorpions concert on March 13, 1991. The Scorpions dramatized their songs with every kind of sound, from a pucker-up and whistle-sweetly solo to a distorted, growling bass guitar noise reminiscent of the aliens in the 1953 sci-fi classic film "War of the Worlds". (26)

A concert starring Wynonna Judd with Tracy Lawrence and Tracy Byrd was held on July 3, 1994. (27) This well attended event was followed the next night by a Super Mex

concert. (28) Police estimated crowd of 4500 greeted the Allman Brothers Band on July 8, 1995. They were treated to a trademark combination of blues, R&B, honky-tonk and gospel music. (29)

In 1998, the Pima County Fair presented Third Eye Blind in concert on the Arizona Super Stage. This concert required a \$10.00 ticket for general admission or an upgraded seating ticket of \$14.00. Both prices included admission to the fair. This is the first time that the Pima County Fair hosted a concert, which was not included in the general admission price. Also, there was a large soccer tournament on the grass fields, behind the Arizona Super Stage.

A Hispanic event was held during the fair at Rosie's Cantina on April 17, 1999, with Texas Latino and Los Zultannes del Norte. This event was very successful with over 4,000 people throughout the day. This event was the first annual Hispanic Day at the Pima County Fair.

A heavy rainstorm hit during the Steve Holy and the Clark Family Experience concert at the fair in 2001. Both groups performed and were compensated, in spite of the rain out. Welde's Big Bear Show was also a part of the fair in 2001. There was some difficulty getting the bears to perform their normal trained stunts. The trainer said his female bears were "in heat" and therefore uncooperative.

For many years, there was a performance stage in the center of the fair known as the Depot Stage. The stage was in a park-like setting with miniature railroad tracks that supported a mini passenger train. Fair patrons could purchase a ticket for a train ride through the fair. Prior to the fair in 2002, the fair administration decided the train ride had become problematic for strategizing the fair layout and stopped the train attraction. It was during this fair that the Depot Stage and park-like setting were renamed, Central Park and the Central Park Stage. Central Park evolved into a family area with family friendly performers and traditional fair activities such as watermelon and pie eating contests, apple bobbing, kiddie karaoke and a free play area.

In 2003, the Pima County Fair was one of the first fairs in the country to host an exhibit, "The Odyssey". The Odyssey was a very large, domed, inflatable tent. Inside this tent, were kiosks with the newly launched XBOX video game system and video games being launched by XBOX and Microsoft. Fair patrons could enter the tent and try out the new system and new games for free. During this fair, Chris Cagle was scheduled to perform on April 19th. On April 12, The William Morris Agency notified the fair that Chris Cagle would not be performing due to a throat condition. Chris Cagle's doctor sent a fax with a written explanation of the throat condition on one of his prescription pads. Also, during this fair, an outside promoter, Cal Productions, used the Super Stage for a Bone Thugs and Harmony concert. Spectators could purchase admission to the fair at the main gate, then purchase a separate ticket to the concert near the Super Stage.

The Adriatic Tiger Show was at the fair in 2004. This animal attraction had rare, white tiger cubs. The Pima County Fair has had this same exhibit many times over the years and has seen these cubs grow into fabulous and impressive adult tigers.

Kaptain Kaleidoscope was an attraction at the fair in 2005, with, "The World's Largest" collection of Kaleidoscopes. This same year, John Shaw, the entertainer formerly known as "The Blockhead", changed his stage name to "The Freak Show". At this time, The Freak Show holds the record for longest returning run acts.

The "Lights, Camera, Animals" show was scheduled to perform at the fair in 2006. This exhibit highlighted primates, namely baboons. This attraction required special permits from the Arizona Department of Game and Fish. After receiving all the necessary permits, the

attraction arrived one day prior to the fair and began to set up their stage and animal holding area. Within one hour of arriving to the Pima County Fairgrounds, the Arizona Game and Fish Department contacted the baboon trainer via cell phone and informed him that his permit had been revoked. Following several calls between fair administration and the Arizona Game and Fish, representatives from Pima County attempted in vain to intervene on behalf of the fair. A heated argument between the trainer and Arizona Game and Fish ensued, thus the trainer was informed that if he did not strike his performance area, his animals could be confiscated. No explanation was ever provided as to why the permits were given and then revoked.

George the Giant was an 11-day performer at the Pima County Fair in 2007. His performance included sword swallowing and other physical feats. He would conclude his performances by stapling \$1.00 bills to his body. Fair spectators could purchase the \$1.00 bills for \$5.00, which George would then remove from his skin using a staple remover, and then autograph them. Prior to each performance, George the Giant would stroll through the fair and provoke interest and promote his next performance by engaging patrons amazed by his massive 7 foot, 3-inch frame.

In 2008, the fair increased concert nights from 4 concerts at the fair, to 5 concerts. An up and coming alternative band, Silverstein, was booked to the fair concert line up. This new edition targeted the teenagers who came to the concert in record setting numbers. A “Super Oldies” concert was scheduled for April 20th to showcase several acts, including Al Wilson. The Entertainment Manager received a late-night phone call, April 18th, from Mr. Wilson’s agent, Alan Beck. Mr. Beck informed the fair that Al Wilson was critically ill in the hospital and would not be able to meet his performance commitment. Nevertheless, the rest of the show went on without him and Al Wilson passed away on April 21st

The national economic crisis of 2009 caused some concern for a profitable event. The fair’s theme, “Big Fun! Big Savings!”, was included in all forms of media and highlighted that all fair entertainment was included with the affordable \$7.00 General Admission. Learning from the successful youth marketing and concerts from 2008, Nat and Alex Wolff, of the Nickelodeon Network’s The Naked Brothers Band, performed on April 24th, setting a Friday night attendance and carnival record.

The last day of the fair in 2010 and during their last performance of the night, The Freak Show included a skin suspension stunt, in which “Lady Diabla” pierced the skin above her knees with large hooks. These hooks were then connected to loops hanging from a type of swing apparatus. Lady Diabla was then hoisted several inches from the ground and suspended by her own flesh. Banda el Recodo performed in concert that same last day and broke all composite revenue records for the last day of the fair by 11%. The fair audience on Sunday, April 24th was primarily of Hispanic descent.

ENTERTAINMENT AND SPECIAL EVENTS AT THE FAIRS UPDATES

In recognition of the Centennial Fair, April 14-24, 2011, concerts were increased to 8 performances, up from the usual 5 or 6 concerts of prior years. All concerts were included with the price of admission to the Pima County Fair with the exception to Los Tigres del Norte. Spectators were given the opportunity to purchase upgraded seating to this concert for an additional \$10.00. (30)

The entertainment for the 2012 fair included 8 concerts which were included with the price of fair admission. Hired acts included Boyz II Men, Ted Nugent and Ramon Ayala y Sus

Bravos del Norte. One week before his scheduled performance, Ted Nugent drew national attention after making inflammatory comments about President Obama at an NRA convention. In spite of some threats and calls for a boycott of his act at the fair, the show went on as scheduled, drawing a huge crowd.

Fair staff developed The Creepy Crawly Slimy permanent exhibit for Pima Hall which had been struggling with drawing fairgoers. It featured animals, insects, information and displays on human and animal body functions which drew large crowds.

The theme for the 2013 fair was “Get Your Fun On!” Concert acts included Hollywood Undead and Easton Corbin. Run acts included Kobert’s Amazing World of Birds, Fire Dancers, Wild About Monkeys, Frisbee dogs and Pig Races.

The Main Stage and dressing rooms at the fairgrounds were demolished prior to the fair to make more room for audiences. An updated and limited seating area was made available for an additional \$10.00 for each of the fair concerts. A Dog Adoption was added on both weekends of the fair which resulted in 67 rescued animals being adopted. Kiddie Kingdom was also added in Pima Hall as one of the permanent attractions. It was modeled after a Renaissance Castle and built to target children ages 7 and under.

“Get Your Ride On” was the theme for the 2014 Pima County Fair. Admission to concerts was included in the \$8.00 admission prices. A limited number of upgraded seats could be purchased for an additional \$15.00.

Concerts this year included: Tyler Farr, Megadeth, Kottonmouth Kings, Bret Michaels, Scott Weiland, Lee Brice, and Voz de Mando. The fair produced 2 hip hop concerts this year: Juicy J and the Kid Ink & YG package. Both of these concerts delivered record-breaking numbers.

Easter Sunday fell on opening Sunday of the fair which resulted in low revenues. Adverse weather affected concert attendance for Scott Weiland and the Lee Brice performance.

Run acts included: The Sea Lion Splash Show, Wild About Monkeys, The Chinese Acrobats from Hebei, Pacific Animal Productions, Pig Races, Great American Pony Ride, Illusionist, Michael Howell, Island Rhythm, Petting Zoo and Danza Azteca, an all Aztec performance group. New events at the fair included a two-day rodeo and a BeerFest.

The Pima County Fair also proudly hosted industry leaders from across the country at the annual International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) Spring Management Conference during the fair. Additionally, the IAFE, Western Fairs Association and Arizona Fairs Association jointly met at the Hilton El Conquistador and the Desert Diamond Casino Hotel for keynotes, industry relevant workshops and breakout sessions. All three groups then visited the Pima County Fair over the course of three days to meet with the Pima County Fair carnival, concessions, marketing and entertainment staff for Q & A sessions relevant to their area of expertise or information sharing interests.

In 2015, the Pima County Fair Concerts were included in the \$8.00 admission prices. A limited number of upgraded seats could be purchased for an additional \$15.00. These upgrades were available for purchase only at the Pima County Fair Main Stage Beer Garden.

The Pima County Fair tried something new on Saturday, April 18th and Sunday, April 19th with the daylong music festival featuring Jack Russell’s Great White, Dokken, Sebastian Bach and Jackyl performing on Saturday, April 18th on 2 separate stages giving the fair a “concert festival” ambiance. Disney act R5 performed a matinee concert on Sunday followed later in the evening by Baby Bash. Both attempts were a success in that the fair saw increased attendance and revenues on both days. Tribute acts BeeGees Gold

and Lights both performed on the 20th and 21st. Other concerts included David Nail, Jeremiah, Switchfoot, G-Eazy, Tesla, Joe Nichols, and Banda Los Recoditos.

Run acts included The Sea Lion Splash Show, The Gascar Racers, Amazing World of Birds Show, Pacific Animal Productions, Hypnotist Tyzen, Great American Pony Ride, and strolling entertainers: Adam the Great, Skip Banks and Fables of the West and GradyMusic.

The Pima County Fair hosted the 2nd annual rodeo with doubled the success from the prior year and also continued with the BeerFest begun in 2014. The fair partnered with the Centurions as the non-profit organization to receive a special event liquor license which helped increase BeerFest profits.

At the 2016 Pima County Fair, concerts were included in the \$8.00 admission price. A limited number of upgraded seats could be purchased for an additional \$15.00. These upgrades were available for purchase only at the Pima County Fair Main Stage Beer Garden to create a sense of urgency.

Concerts early in the Fair this year were: Nelly, Grupo Control and Banda Machos. The 15th was the Rock Fest, utilizing both the corner and main stages with an AC/DC tribute act along with Blue Oyster Cult, Quiet Riot and Ratt followed by MC Magic and Salt n Pepa the next two nights. The Pima County Fair tried something new with a Firefall concert on the 18th to entice a baby boomer audience and switched to a Christian music format the next evening, both of which delivered record breaking numbers. Post Malone was in concert on the 20th. P.O.D., Hoobastank and Alien Ant Farm were Friday, the 22nd, which was followed by another festival date with LOCASH and Clay Walker on Saturday. The fair ended with Kalin and Myles in a matinee performance, followed by Roberto Tapia.

New run acts were added to the fair line up and included: The Blacksmith Shop, The Family Diversity Project, Aussie Kingdom, Sea Lion Encounters, Pharaohs of Egypt and Something Ridiculous. The returning run acts were High Country Wood Carvers, Amazing World of Birds, Tyzen, Hypnotist Extraordinaire, The Freak Show, Gradymusic, Gascar Racers, Petting Zoo, Fables of the West and Pacific Animal Productions

Prior to the 2016 Fair, an addition was built on the east side of Old West Hall to house a new attraction for the Fair, a blacksmith shop. Blacksmithing tools owned by the Flores family became available after the William Flores and Son Blacksmith & Welding Shop closed. It had been in business in downtown Tucson since 1920. With the generous support of the Flores family, this equipment was moved to the Fairgrounds and the display became an instant success. The Shop was manned by artisans from the Arizona Artist Blacksmith Association who kept up a constant demonstration of creating new items for display or sale. It is hoped that this group will also be available in the future when groups such as RV Rallies are at the Fairgrounds.

The Pima County Fair again hosted the 3rd annual rodeo as well as the BeerFest, both of which were a great success.

The 2017 Pima County Fair Concerts were included in the \$8.00 admission price. A limited number of upgraded seats could be purchased for an additional \$15.00. These upgrades were available for purchase only at the Pima County Fair Main Stage Beer Garden.

Concerts this year were: On the 20th, T-PAIN with Naughty By Nature; on the 21st, Cinderella's Tom Keiffer with Winger; and on Saturday night the 22nd Josh Turner who delivered a record turn out with over 20,000 vehicles parked. The following night's performers were Ramon Ayala, Felix Cavaliere's Rascals, Village People, For King & Country, Lil Yachty and Dirty Heads. The last weekend featured Tanya Tucker and

Septima Banda on Saturday and Kip Moore on Sunday evening.

Jungle Jack Hanna was featured on the afternoon on the first Saturday of the Fair. New run acts were added to the Fair lineup and included Powerhouse and the Bayou. The returning run acts were High Country Wood Carvers, Tyzen, Hypnotist Extraordinaire, The Freak Show, Gradymusic, Gascar Racers, Petting Zoo, Fables of the West and Pacific Animal Productions.

The Pima County Fair again hosted the 4th annual rodeo and continued with the BeerFest.

The 2018 Fair concerts began with Ludacris on April 19th, the opening night of the Fair. This was followed by Anthrax and Everclear on Saturday and Randy Houser on Sunday. Weekday evening concerts were Randy Hauser, I Love the 90's Tour with Rob Base, All 4 One, Kid n Play, Jefferson Starship, MercyMe, JaRule & Ashanti and REO Speedwagon. The last Saturday night featured Easton Corbin and the Fair wrapped up on Sunday with Banda el Recodo.

New run acts were added to the fair lineup and included Cowgirl Tricks, Bengal Tiger Exhibit, Washboard Willy and AC/DC Tribute Band, Noise Pollution. The returning run acts were High Country Wood Carvers, Gascar Racers, Petting Zoo, Fables of the West and Pacific Animal Productions and Something Ridiculous Jugglers.

The Pima County Fair hosted the 5th annual rodeo and continued with the BeerFest. On Friday, April 27th, a strong microburst gust of wind lifted the petting zoo tent and tossed it into a power line, knocking out power to the entire grounds for 2 hours.

2019 Entertainment.

The 2019 Fair concerts began with Shaggy on Thursday, April 18th, followed on consecutive nights by Seether, Frankie Ballard and Carlie Pearce, Mark Farner's American Band, MJ Live (as Michael Jackson Tribute), Newsboys, TLC, P.O.D., Buckcherry, Adelita's Way, Chris Janson and on the last night Dia de la Banda with Korita's Musical, Banda Machos, La Original Banda Limon.

New run acts were added to the Fair line up and included The Family Fun Stage with Professor Smart, Greg Frisbee, 80's and Gentlemen and Rockets K9 Frisbee Dog Show. The returning run acts were Bengal Tiger Exhibit, Sea Lion Encounters, Pig Races, Petting Zoo, and Pacific Animal Productions.

Just before the Fair, the Newcastle Disease was found in chickens up in Flagstaff. The discovery of the disease initially caused concern with regards to the Poultry show as well as the traveling attractions and vendors that traveled with birds. The fair staff, 4-H, a representative from Pima County, Dr. Staten and others formed a taskforce on what would be done should an outbreak be confirmed and a quarantine enforced. Fortunately, the disease was contained before it could spread.

2022 Entertainment

Tai Verdes with special guest Renforshort was the opening night concert for the 2022 Fair followed by Anthrax, Scotty McCreery and Fiesta Fuego: Baby Bash, MCMagic, Franki G and OG Frost the next three nights. Village People performed on Monday night. They were contracted to perform in 2020 but they honored that agreement with the same terms. The following night's concerts were AB Quintanilla III and the Kumbia All Starz, Crowder, T.I. and Mammoth WVH with special guest Ayrton Jones.

The Easton Corbin concert on Saturday night once again set the record for highest beer sales for a single day. Los Tucanes de Tijuana were also contracted to perform in 2020 and honored the 2020 agreement with the same terms.

New run acts were added to the Fair line up and included Bruno's Bengal Tiger's, Brad's

World of Reptiles and an electronic violinist, SVET. The returning run acts were The Family Fun Stage with Professor Smart, Sea Lion Splash, Pig Races and the Petting Zoo.

Due to continuing Covid-19 concerns, public schools did not participate in student performances. Additionally, student field trips were significantly lower and Special Needs Day was cancelled.

2023 was a challenging talent buying year. There were several confirmations then cancellations made by a few of the headlining talent who had to be replaced by other artists. Some of the concert acts included Lil Jon, Jordan Davis, Lee Greenwood, Jeremy Camp, and Dirty Heads. Run acts included the Sea Lion Splash Show, the Nerveless Nochs, Cirque Extreme and Tyzen, Master Hypnotist.

The 2024 concert lineup was very diverse. Some of the concert acts included Wiz Khalifa, Dylan Scott, That Mexican OT, Los Lonely Boys, Sublime with Rome, Chevelle and Banda el Recodo. Run acts included the Sea Lion Splash Show, Awesome Otters, Twinkle Time, Red a Taylor Swift Tribute, Salsa Steel Drum Band, Bird Show, Petting Zoo, Pony Rides and Pig Races. The 2025 concert line included the Fair's first EDM Booking with Steve Aoki and the branding of a new event, Flow Jam, which featured Bone Thugs and Harmony, Ying Yang Twins, Slim Thug and Mike Jones. The Fair added additional talent on a side stage to entice two different audiences. Some of the acts included Warrant, Xzibit, and La Brissa. Run acts included the Sea Lion Splash Show, Nina Experience, Salsa Steel Drum Band, Bird Show, Petting Zoo, Pony Rides and Pig Races.

CITATIONS

1. DECORATE GROVE FOR COUNTY FAIR. *The Tucson Citizen*. 19 October 1911.
2. PIMA COUNTY FAIR OPENS TO A BIG CROWD. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 26 October 1911: 1.
3. THE FIRST PIMA COUNTY FAIR WILL OPEN WEDNESDAY MORNING. *The Tucson Citizen*. 24 October 1911: 5.
4. CAVALRY BAND WILL GIVE CONCERT TODAY AT THE FAIR GROUNDS. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 17 October 1912: 8.
5. RESCUE RACING ONE OF FEATURES GIVEN BY FOURTH CAVALRY. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 20 October 1912: 1.
6. SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR advertisement. *The Tucson Citizen*-Second Edition. 17 March 1915: 1.
7. SOUTHERN ARIZONA FAIR advertisement. *The Tucson Citizen*. 4 November 1915: 2.
8. FAIR OPENS ITS GATES FOR BIG THREE DAYS PROGRAM. *The Tucson Citizen*. 4 November 1915: 1-2.
9. Horse Show Will Start Tonight With Exhibition On Catalina Polo Field While Wolfville Goes On As Town Program. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 21 February 1929: 1.
10. INDIAN EVENT TO OPEN RODEO. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 20 February 1936: 1.
11. PIMA COUNTY FAIR advertisement. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 26 October 1949: B4.
12. Honey Blonde Is Named Miss Pima County-1960. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 10 March 1960: A5.
13. Fr. Kino To Be Theme Of Next Livestock Show. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 11 August 1962: A8.
14. Drawing Of Father Kino A Feature At Show-Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 10 March 1963: A12.

15. PIMA COUNTY FAIR and SAILA advertisement. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 13 March 1963: B3.
16. PIMA COUNTY FAIR and SAILA advertisement. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 11 March 1964: C4.
17. 10,000 On Hand For Opening Day Of County Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 23 March 1967: B1.
18. County Fair Opens Under Fair Skies. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 19 March 1970: B1.
19. Doug Kershaw To Lead Entertainers As Fair Opens Wednesday. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 24 March 1975: B1.
20. Preview Day To Kick Off Pima Fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 18 April 1976: C1.
21. Billy Carter fee to be \$10,000. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 16 March 1977: 1.
22. Castro, Carter open fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 16 April 1977: B1.
23. Carnival rides, magic, music, food, home arts, to highlight 1980 county fair. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 16 April 1980: E7.
24. 200 shows. *The Arizona Daily Star-Advertising Supplement*. 9 April 1986: 3.
25. Clint Black's a tough act to follow-ask Alabama. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 26 November 1990: B3.
26. A Scorpions blitz. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 14 March 1991: B1.
27. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 14 December 1993.
28. Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Minutes of meeting. 27 July 1994.
29. 4,500 fans turn out to worship Allman Brothers Band. *The Arizona Daily Star*. 9 July 1995: A8.
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CARNIVALS

In researching early newspaper articles, there was no mention found of a carnival at either the 1911 or 1912 fairs. A fair advertisement in the 1915 Tucson Citizen indicated that there was a carnival at that year's fair. (1)

Midway rides for the 1934 fair provided by Frank Burke were the Tilt-a-whirl, Ferris wheel, kiddie ride, Iron Claw, a shooting gallery, a ball game and bumper cars. (2) The midway for the February, 1938 fair was located at the west entrance. There were 14 concessions and six rides, and one, the Octopus was described as "absolutely new". These were all part of the State Fair Shows which was also scheduled to return to Tucson again in March by the American Legion drum and bugle corps. (3)

A Midway Special, the Folk's Carnival-Circus, was part of the featured entertainment for the 1948 fair. (4) There was no carnival at the 1949 fair but three Kiddyland rides were set up for the children. (5)

The Siebrand Carnival, with amusement park rides of all sorts, provided midway entertainment at the 1951 fair. (6) Siebrand Bros. Circus and Carnival continued to furnish rides and carnival attractions at the fair for a number of years. They also staged periodic shows in front of the rodeo grandstands in 1956. (7)

In 1958 Siebrand Bros. Carnival & Circus again provided entertainment for the fair. They set up just east of the Quonset building at the South 6th Ave. facility. They had 20 rides "providing entertainment for all ages". Their circus, complete with animal acts and aerialists, was put on in front of the grandstand. (8) Pima County received \$6,027.45 as the County's share of the profits from the Siebrand Bros. The fair commission received 25 per cent of the gate and 15 per cent of each ride. (9) The Siebrand Bros. also provided their

circus, the midway and carnival rides in 1960. (10)

Midway for the 1964 fair was provided by Craft's 20 Big Shows. One of their featured rides was the giant \$175,000 "Skywheel". (11)

Art Frazier's World Fair Shows, Inc. provided midway entertainment as early as 1967(12). In 1970, its midway was described as having a fascinating variety of rides inspired by the space age as well as such perennial favorites as the old fashioned ferris wheel, merry-go-round and "dodge'em". (13) In 1980, Ray Cammack purchased the carnival but continued to operate it under the Art Frazier name through 1982.

In 1983, for the first time under their new name, Ray Cammack Shows began providing the rides, games and some of the food concessions for the fair. RCS, as it is now known, is one of the most highly regarded carnivals in the country. Owned by Guy and Charlene Leavitt, RCS is headquartered in Laveen, Arizona. The Leavitt family has a longtime involvement with carnivals since both Guy and Charlene's parents were owners of carnivals. Charlene is Ray Cammack's daughter and Guy's parents owned and operated H. A. Leavitt Attractions as well as the Great Western Carnival. It is family operated and continues to have Cammack and Leavitt family members as its key management. (14)

In addition to playing at the Arizona State Fair, they also provide the carnivals for some of the largest fairs in the southwest, including the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, the Los Angeles County Fair, Orange County Fair and the Del-Mar Fair.

The April 2000 fair opened on the 20th for an eleven-day run. The estimated 2-million-dollar production featured 46 rides brought in by Ray Cammack Shows. The Wilde Maus Roller Coaster, a German ride, made its second appearance in the United States having only stopped once before at the Houston Livestock Show. The ride is a two-man roller coaster. The cars chase each other around the tracks at heights of up to 80 feet. "Teens seem to like a good thrill ride" said Tony Fiori, a spokesman for the Show, "and this ride sure does that". (15)

Some of the interesting facts regarding the scope of the RCS operation are:

- RCS rides are dismantled and assembled with the assistance of 6 forklifts, 2 cranes and 2 aerial platforms.
 - Nearly 84,000 internal inspections are performed each year by supervisors, foremen and Safety Services.
 - There are over 385 loads that go on the road for this show.
 - There are over 100 personal RV trailers and motorhomes that travel with them, as well as 35 bunkhouses that house the employees that travel with them.
 - Between 4,000-5,000 drug tests are performed annually on management and staff.
- Ray Cammack Shows was the carnival for the 2011 Centennial Fair. Thus, for over 30 years, RCS has provided rides, games and food concessions at the fair. Under an agreement with the Southwestern Fair Commission effective in 2008, RCS agreed to conduct and promote the carnival through 2013. At that time, the SWFC and RCS have the option of renewing their agreement for an additional five Fairs.

CARNIVAL UPDATES

On May 18, 2013, the SWFC and RCS signed a Carnival Extension Agreement which will keep RCS as the carnival for the Fair for five additional years with the Agreement expiring on May 31, 2018.

In 2019, the SWFC entered into a new agreement with Ray Cammack Shows (RCS), to conduct carnivals at the Fairgrounds through 2024. RCS, with its headquarters in Laveen, Arizona, continues to be one of the leading carnival operators in the country, still conducting carnivals at the Houston

Livestock Show, the Arizona State Fair and a number of the larger fairs in California. With mutual agreement between the SWFC and RCS, they may agree to extend the agreement or enter into a new agreement for an additional five years.

Terms of the agreement require RCS to pay a \$50,000 annual "Improvement Fee", 40 % for gross ride revenues, 10 % for game fees and 12% on food and concession for up to 12 stands and standard fees for any additional food stands. In 2022, the revenue from the RCS accounted for 36% of the gross revenue for the Fair. Ride ticketing began selling ride and game tickets through a comprehensive credit card system.

On March 20, 2020, at the Southwestern Fair Commission Board meeting, the Commission voted unanimously to cancel the 2020 Fair. This decision was based on the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The realization that large group gatherings would not be advised and the expectation that Pima County and State of Arizona orders & proclamations would disallow these types of mass gatherings led to this difficult decision.

On January 28, 2021, at the Southwestern Fair Commission Board meeting, the Commission was once again faced with the difficult decision regarding the upcoming Fair due to the COVID-19 Pandemic still ongoing. It was decided that with Pima County and the State of Arizona maintaining their respective orders & proclamations restricting mass gatherings, that the 2021 Pima County Fair be canceled for the second consecutive year.

Finally, after two long years the Pima County Fair returned! From April 21-May 1, 2022, Pima County residents and visitors to Pima County welcomed back the 11-day event after the COVID-19 restrictions were finally lifted by the State of Arizona and Pima County. The Fair was a tremendous success with carnival ride proceeds produced the highest \$ ride gross ever.

The 2023 Fair was the 42nd year that RCS has been the carnival providing rides and games at the Fair. As always, there were new rides and games as well as new "Fair Food". Once again, the Fair was a huge success producing the second highest ride gross ever seen at the Fair. In 2025, Carnival presales continued to increase, growing by 49% over the previous record..

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THE 4-H PROGRAM

The Morrill Act, which created the Land Grant college system, was passed by Congress in 1862. The first comprehensive legislation creating the Agricultural Extension Service was the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. As a result, the Extension Service played a significant role in fairs becoming more of an educational tool rather than just a place to show off accomplishments. (1) The 4-H movement started in the United States after a number of educational reports were issued which identified the need for agricultural and homemaking classes in schools and communities. (1) The first reported 4-H (or 3-H) programs began around 1902 in local schools. The first states reporting these programs were Iowa and Ohio. (2) Since the program was based on grass roots efforts, it is impossible to exactly determine the first location.

Land-grant colleges collaborated with these local efforts. Their faculty and later Extension agents found that young people were willing to try new methods or seed varieties to improve crop yields. The land-grant college for Arizona at the University of Arizona was established in 1885. One of the first colleges established was the agriculture college housed for a while in Old Main. The faculty hired was challenged to take the information of the University to the people of the state. For them, that meant taking their educational programs on the road using trains several times each year. These trains would take faculty members to the rural areas of the state and offer educational programs for farm families. (3)

They were also conducting research studies in the field. They would work with local producers to try new methods and varieties on local farms. They would then conduct tours to see if the new methods increased production. County fairs were also a way to showcase these improvements. Visitors to the fairs got to talk not only to the faculty members, but more importantly, to the local farmer who had actually worked on the project. (3)

In 1913, the first 4-H club in Arizona was started in Chandler. It was the Boy's Cotton Club. (3) Certainly, cotton was one of the most important crops produced in that area and it would be logical that the sons of the producers would join a club where they learned more about growing cotton. These clubs were established in the local schools. It would also be logical that these sons of the cotton producers would be attending schools near their farms.

Having some kind of competition among these members was also a way to improve practices. In 1914, Victor Ball of the San Xavier 4-H club was the first Corn Club Contest winner. (3) 4-H projects not only reflected the interests of the parents but also the research interests of the faculty members who were supporting these efforts. These faculty members were often the same people who organized contests at the local county fairs.

The land grant colleges must have seen the value of having educated young people demonstrating new practices and showing off their work. In 1917, they brought the first 4-H Boys Encampment to the State Fair. Girls, as well as boys, gave demonstrations to the general public. (3)

In 1921, Pima County added their first County Extension office. The first county agents

were hired and their office was opened in the offices of the Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau shared a mission with Extension of improving the lives of farm families. One of the first events organized by the home demonstration agent was called an “Achievement Day and Fair”. Regardless of whether or not there was a county fair, these educators found it essential for their educational programs to have such an event. If there was a county fair, their achievement day program was combined with that. If there wasn’t a county fair because of some economic or political issues (wars or depression), they held their own one-day event. (4)

The first 4-H exhibits displayed at a Pima County Fair were in 1929. These were the result of 4-H sewing and cooking classes. It was expected that as many as twenty communities would participate. (5)

Most of the programs for the 4-H program were focused on farming, crops, gardening, poultry (ostriches), and food preservation. Other than some faculty research on native livestock, little Extension work was done on livestock. The first Pima County Home Demonstration Agent, Evalyn Bentley, remarked in one of her reports that the County Agricultural Agent was so impressed by the results of the Achievement Day and Fair, he asked to bring in chickens to show off those programs.

There have been numerous examples of University of Arizona personnel being involved in early fairs. Dr. E. L. Scott from the University was the Secretary-Treasurer as well as the Beef Cattle Superintendent in the early years of the Tucson Livestock Show which had begun in 1935. (6) C. B. Brown, the Pima County Agricultural Agent, was active for a number of years as the Secretary-Treasurer of the fair board and was the fair manager of the 1933 Pima County Fair. (7)

It wasn’t until after World War II that livestock projects were added to the fair as 4-H exhibits. Other projects included clothing, grooming, home improvement and leadership. Horse projects were not allowed in 4-H until 1956. That marked a major change in the program. (4)

After World War II, the program made a major change because public school teachers could no longer serve as 4-H volunteers because of increasing class sizes and other challenges so that a volunteer movement was begun. Parents were recruited to serve as volunteers. Programs were held in homes and schools. Community clubs of several hundred were organized in the more rural areas of the county. 4-H did not exist for the Tucson Community. They also added another level of county agents, “Assistant Agents”, who were usually younger and less experienced. They were hired to support these 4-H clubs. (3)(8).

In the 1960’s, more federal reports showed the need for 4-H programs for all youth especially those living in urban communities. 4-H proved to be effective in teaching nutrition, building competence and adding focus to global issues. Pima County added additional 4-H agents to deal with increasing numbers of communities and members. The program was increasing the number of projects available to youth. Small stock projects with rabbits and chickens were added because these projects could be conducted in urban areas.

The agents and volunteers were challenged with how to include these diverse projects into the county fair. How do you add bicycle safety to the county fair? How can you include geology? Horse shows take a lot of time and energy. During this time, not only were 4-H clubs led by volunteers, but the volunteers played a significant role in conducting the fairs.

The beginning of the 1970s saw a number of changes in the 4-H program. Additional

federal funds added personnel to work with inner city youth. At one time this amounted to four 4-H agents and 4-part-time assistants. Enrollments grew significantly and included shooting education, handy man, rocketry, computers and many, many more. In the early 1970s, the increased demands of more members in livestock projects reached a point where the youth exhibits at the fair were quite large. The Fair was held in conjunction with the Southern Arizona International Livestock Show in those years. The 4-H livestock show and sale went into the wee hours of the morning. At that time, the Extension agents and volunteers went to the County Board of Supervisors to see what changes they could make. (9)

In 1971, the Pima County Leaders' Association became incorporated with the intent of possibly conducting their own county fair. At that time, this small group of volunteers also ran a small food booth out of a retrofitted horse trailer. A small sub-committee managed the livestock sale. (9)

After the Southwestern Fair Commission was organized and the fair was moved to the Houghton Road location, the 4-H organization became much more involved and took on greater leadership in a number of areas. At the same time, fewer women were working outside the home and the program benefited from their time and efforts. More women were able to manage the 4-H food booth even as it grew into a separate restaurant. The leadership of the livestock sales committee assisted in bringing in more 4-H livestock and small stock projects. They also gave leadership to improving the facilities at the fair.

One important event occurred in 1974. 4-H agent Phil Lewis was introduced to Governor Raul Castro inside the large tent that housed the livestock projects. During the discussion, he moved the Governor under a leak in the tent. There is much speculation that this experience lead to Governor Castro making funds available from the "Governor's Fund" to construct what is now called the Governor's Livestock Complex. (8)

The addition of new projects and activities continued until the 1990's when budgetary issues began to limit 4-H faculty and staff. As more family members began to work outside of the home, the number of exhibits per member began to be reduced. The total number of exhibits decreased from a high of 5000 in the 1980's to about 1000 in 2000. This corresponds with the reduction in total 4-H membership in Pima County from a high of 1486 in 1991-1992 to 811 in 2008-2009. (10)

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FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA (FFA)

The letters FFA stands for Future Farmers of America. FFA is a youth organization that is a part of the agricultural education programs at middle and high schools that was founded in 1928. In 1988, the official name of the organization was changed from "Future Farmers of America" to "The National FFA Organization" to reflect the growing diversity of agriculture. It is a goal of the program to lead students to careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture.

The first FFA chapter to be chartered in Pima County was at Amphitheater High School in 1952. For years they and other local FFA chapters have participated in the Pima County Fair in the same classes as other junior exhibitors. In the livestock area, that has been primarily with 4-H exhibitors. FFA members have been largely involved at the fair by showing the large animal species: beef, swine and lambs.

Members of several local chapters have exhibited plants from their horticulture projects and items made in their agricultural mechanics classes. Students in the Amphitheater chapter have also helped the fair over the years by building and repairing livestock panels used at the fair. The young people from the various participating chapters have always assisted in conducting the junior livestock auction. In addition, a number of FFA alumni have been active in assisting in the junior livestock programs at the fair.

JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SALES

There is no mention of auctions of livestock in newspaper accounts of the very early fairs. However, an article in The Arizona Daily Star on March 24, 1935 reported that Seymour Thurber, a 12-year-old winner of the 4-H Club contest and winner of third place in the fat steer class of the Tucson Livestock Show, sold his Hereford steer, weighing 620 pounds, for 36 cents per pound and brought \$223.20. Interestingly, the auction was held at the Santa Rita Hotel. (1)

Because of World War II, no Pima County Fairs were held from 1943-47. In 1944, the second annual 4-H Victory Market Day was held which allowed 4-H members to show and sell their steers. Ten steers were exhibited and placed alive prior to their carcasses also being judged. It was reported that "under government ceiling prices these steers would have brought only \$1,169.40, while purchasers paid a total of \$1,861.90, extra profit for the boys of \$692.50". (2) These 4-H Market Days continued to be held through 1947.

The 1967 Fair auctioned off both 4-H and junior division livestock. Mary Montgomery, for the first time in the history of the fair, had two grand champions. Tucson restaurant owner Dean Short purchased both her 793-pound grand champion steer for \$1.55 per pound and her 98-pound champion lamb for \$3.00 per pound. A total of 166 steers, lambs and hogs were sold. (3)

The prices received in the early years of the sales often reflected the value of livestock on the open market. Floor prices at the 1971 sale were 32.5 cents per pound for steers, and 23 and 16.5 cents per pound respectively for lambs and swine. In 1972, some lots were sold with 4 or 5 animals per lot. The low price in the sale was 40 cents per pound for one group of swine.

During the 1975-85 period, the steers, lambs and swine exhibited by the 4-H and FFA exhibitors at the fair were sold by an Executive Sales Committee appointed by the Pima County Leaders' Association. They worked with the Livestock Advisory Board appointed by the Southwestern Fair Commission (SWFC) in conducting the sale. The money from the sale of the animals was funneled through the accounts of the SWFC before being distributed to the exhibitors after the auction. A separate auction was held for the small stock.

The auction in 1982 had a total of 411 animals consigned which was the largest number of junior livestock ever sold at the fair. There were a total of 350 lots in the auction with a number of lots sold with two animals per lot. In addition, a lamb which had been owned by Jill Schaffer, a member of the Tanque Verde Community 4-H Club who had passed away prior to the fair, was auctioned. The total proceeds from the sale of her lamb went into a scholarship fund which had been established in her name.

In 1985, discussions were held regarding the feasibility of forming a separate entity to conduct the junior sales. Logistics had become more complicated with accounting somewhat difficult but at the same time a good reserve had been built up. There were also concerns about the proceeds going through the SWFC accounts and possibly being viewed by the county audit as being funds belonging to the Commission. (4) As a result, the Pima County Junior Livestock Sales, Inc. (PCJLS) was incorporated on February 26, 1986. The incorporators were Donald E. Clark, Ralph Hall and Marvin Selke. (5)

The PCJLS committee has continued to hold the annual auction at the conclusion of each fair selling all of the qualified animals exhibited in separate auctions for large and small stock. The peak in livestock numbers since the PCJLS committee has been conducting the auction occurred in 1994 when a total of 370 beef, lambs and swine were sold. The large stock auction in 2006 had the largest gross sale to date with 257 head of livestock bringing a total of \$394,221.

In 2007, meat goats which had previously been sold in the small stock sale, were sold in the large livestock sale for the first time.

Over the years the PCJLS committee has shared the cost of purchasing new equipment with the Southwestern Fair Commission. This has included buying a storage building, repairing panels, as well as purchasing small stock cages and most recently new sheep, swine and goat pens. In 2006 they established a Scholarship Endowment Fund through the Arizona 4-H Youth Foundation for 4-H and FFA members who have completed animal projects in Pima County.

Past presidents of the PCJLS have been Marvin Selke, Dan Rorbach, Jean Buzzard and Ed Konrath. Jose Bernal is the current president. (6)

JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SALES UPDATES

A total of 187 head of steers, lambs, swine and meat goats as well as 66 head of small stock were sold in the two auctions conducted in 2012 by the Sales Committee. It was an extremely good sale generating a total of \$390,160.50 for the 252 4-H and FFA exhibitors that consigned animals at the auction.

In total, 276 4-H and FFA youths sold animals in the 2013 Large and Small Stock Auctions for a total of \$452,139.75.

At the 2014 Large Stock Auction, it was announced that the Hall of Champions was being renamed the "Jean Buzzard Hall of Champions". A donated market hog was auctioned off with the proceeds going into an endowment for a scholarship fund for Pima

County 4-H youths that are going to college or trade school. Nearly \$20,000 was raised for that purpose.

The 2015 Junior Livestock Sale was extremely strong with record prices paid in several species. Madison Ramirez's Grand Champion market goat brought \$42.00 a pound and was purchased by the trio of Meade Insurance, Willcox Livestock Auction and the Jim Click Automotive Group. The Reserve Champion market swine owned by Carter Ham brought \$36.00 a pound and was purchased by long time buyer Cimetta Engineering & Construction. Hudlay Minerals was the successful bidder on the Reserve Champion market lamb shown by LynZee Jordan and sold for \$35.00 per pound.

A total of 171 animals were sold in the Large Livestock Auction. In the Small Stock Sale, 73 animals were brought a total of \$51,000.

The combined total of \$526,174.00 from both the Large and Small Stock Auctions set a new record for gross sales for the Pima County Junior Livestock Sales Committee at the 2016 Fair. The Large Stock Sale set a new record price when the Grand Champion Lamb exhibited by Joe Boyd from Tanque Verde Livestock 4-H sold for \$45.00 per pound on a bid by Tucson Transport.

In the Small Stock Auction, four new records were set. Sierra Mining and Crushing purchased the Champion Rabbit Fryer shown by Christine Toering of Tanque Verde Community 4-H for \$2500.00 as well as the Champion Poultry Broiler owned by Ashlynn King of Littletown Ranchers 4-H for \$2200.00. They combined with Maura Schoenie to buy a blue-ribbon pigeon exhibited by Ronnie Palmenberg of the Southeast Ranchers 4-H Club for \$1700.00. Adobe Vet Center purchased the Champion Poultry Meat Pen exhibited by Natalie Torres from the Whetstone Ranchers 4-H for \$2250.00.

Over the past few years, the Pima County Junior Livestock Sales Committee has worked to improve the sale experience at the Fair. Changes include new livestock pens, TV monitors, professional announcers, great pre-sale brunches, a new sale catalog format and the PCJLS website. This has been possible through the support of the Southwestern Fair Commission, buyers and sponsors.

More records were set at the 2017 Junior Livestock Auctions. The total gross combined sales of the Large and Small Stock Auctions was \$587,337.50 from a total of 291 animals sold. In the Large Stock Auction, the average price per pound for the different species were \$6.92 for beef, \$13.68 for sheep, \$7.19 for swine and \$13.90 for market goats.

The highest price paid for a champion animal was \$30.00 per pound for the Reserve Champion Lamb exhibited by Alexxis Flores of Tanque Verde Livestock 4-H and purchased by Hudbay Rosemont Copper. Autumn Gilbert of Littletown Ranchers 4-H received \$29.00 per pound for her Grand Champion Market Hog on a bid by Steel Management, Inc. and Lucky Wishbone.

In the Small Stock Auction, \$2,500.00 was paid for both the Champion Rabbit Meat Pen exhibited by Amberlin Fleming of Pusch Ridge Roders 4-H and purchased by Century Park Properties and for the Champion Rabbit Fryer owned by Sedona Todd also from Pusch Ridge Riders and bought on a combined bid from Canyon Ferris, Kelsee Ferris and Carter Ham.

The 2018 Junior Livestock Auctions resulted with another gain in the total number of animals sold and another new record in total sales income. With 245 head of animals sold in the Large Stock Auction and 112 lots of Small Stock sold, the total gross sales was \$747,494.00. In the Large Stock Auction, the species averages per pound were Swine: \$6.72, Steers: \$7.32, Lambs: \$12.76 and Goats: \$10.90.

The Grand Champion steer exhibited by Elizabeth McGibbon from the Sahuarita

Community 4-H Club was purchased by Aaron Estes for \$15.00 per pound. Lucky Wishbone purchased the Grand Champion lamb shown by Alexxis Flores of Tanque Verde Livestock 4-H for \$51.00 a pound as well as the Grand Champion market goat owned by Madison Ramirez from the Littletown Ranchers 4-H Club. Autumn Gilbert from Littletown Ranchers received \$40.00 a pound for her Grand Champion market hog on a bid from Modern Productions, Alan & Jan Levin and The Ham Family.

In the Small Stock Auction, Trinity Roofing and Adobe Vet Center paired up to purchase the Champion Rabbit Meat Pen which was exhibited by Amberlin Fleming from the Pusch Ridge Riders for \$3,100.00. Shepherd Dircks of Tierra Homesteaders had the Champion Poultry Meat Pen which was bought by Century Park Properties for \$3,000.00.

In 2019, the Large Livestock Auction had 237 lots. The sale had goats averaging \$12.15/lb., lambs \$11.33/lb., hogs \$5.82/lb. and steers \$4.89/lb. The Small Stock Auction set a record with 117 lots selling for \$96,025. The total gross sales for the combined auctions were \$711,662. The Small Stock Sale set a new record price for the Poultry Meat Pen selling for \$2,700 and was purchased by the Adobe Vet Center.

With the Fair being cancelled because of COVID in 2020, it was not possible to hold events with spectators at the Fairgrounds. As a result, it was decided to hold an online auction of the 4-H and FFA member's project animals. Guidelines were approved by the County for the members in the large stock projects to bring their animals to the Fairgrounds on a schedule and unload their animals, have them weighed and photographed, loaded back up and taken home. While at the Fairgrounds, the animals were inspected by a three-member committee to ensure that the animals were market ready. Similar arrangements were also used for the small stock exhibitors. With no live judging, there were no champions selected or other placing made so sale orders were made up on a random basis. The sale was viewed as being a real success as a result of lot of effort by the PCJLC headed by Laura Levin, the Sale Committee president. A total of 175 animals were auctioned off in the Large Stock Sale and 45 sold in the Small Stock Sale.

In 2021, in spite of there still being no Fair, Pima County allowed the various species of animals to be brought to the Fairgrounds for staggered one day shows. Therefore, unlike the previous year, champions were selected, and placings made. It still wasn't possible to hold live auctions because of the County's restrictions on probable crowd size. Again, a successful online auction was conducted. In the Large Stock Sale, 185 head were sold and in the Small Stock sale there were 66.

After not having a County Fair for two years, not only did the 2022 Fair turn out to be the best ever but that same enthusiasm carried over in support of the 4-H and FFA animals sold in the auction at the Fair. The Grand Champion market lamb exhibited by Adilene Epley from the Robles Ranchers 4-H Club was purchased by Lucky Wishbone for \$40.00 a pound. A new record for the highest selling Grand Champion steer was set when Southwestern Dakota, Inc. purchased Marana Stockmen's Baylee Stough's steer for \$22.00 a pound. In the Large Stock Auction, the steers averaged \$11.72/lb., the swine \$13.68/lb., the lambs \$21.20/lb. and the goats \$22.84/lb. The Large Stock Sale grossed \$1,095,246 with 174 head being sold and the Small Stock Sale brought in \$134,825 for 80 lots. The overall total for the two sales was \$1,230,071.

Sale prices for the animals remained very strong again at the 2023 Fair but averages down a bit from the records set in 2022. In the Large Stock Auction, 199 head sold for \$1,039,064. The Small Stock Sale had 116 lots that accounted for \$155,025 with the total gross for the two sales coming to \$1,194,089.

Two long term buyers, the Jim Click Automotive Team and Sharon Landeen, were

recognized as for having bought at the Large Stock Auction for 50 Years. Tucson Electric Power and Lucky Wishbone had not been previously appropriately recognized because of the COVID lockdowns and were also recognized after having been buyers for 53 years.

The 2024 Junior Livestock Sales had the highest total sales in its history. The Grand Champion meat goat exhibited by Ever Castaneda from Tanque Verde Livestock 4-H sold for \$51.00/lb and was purchased by the Ham Family, Ed and Cindy Konrath and Lucky Wishbone. Peyton Newton of Dynamic Livestock received \$39.00/lb for her Grand Champion lamb on a bid by the Tucson Rodeo Foundation. Tucson Contracting and K&R Automotive teamed up to buy the Grand Champion Swine for \$35.00/lb. It was shown by Martin Svedberg, a member of the Sierrita Mountain Livestock 4-H Club.

For the first time at the Fair, heifers were shown together with the steers in the market beef show. That show was won by Alexandra Larson from Marana Stockmen with a steer that sold for \$22.00/lb and was bought by Southwestern Dakotah, Inc. A record price for a steer was set when Tucson Frozen Storage paid \$52.00/lb for a steer exhibited by Ella Levin from Littletown Ranchers.

The Small Stock Auction was very good as well. A Commercial Turkey exhibited by Peregrine Martinez-Chavez of Sahuarita Community 4-H brought \$4,200.00 by a group of buyers: Tina Ramirez, Madison Ramirez, Bold Imagery and In Loving Memory of Elena Munoz. Century Park Properties had the winning bid of \$3,500.00 for a Fryer Meat Pen owned by Whitlow Tripp of Marana Stockmen 4-H Club. The total sales for the 249 head of Large Stock and 125 lots in the Small Stock Sale totaled \$1,561,919.00.

In 2025 there was an increase in the number of livestock in the Large Livestock Auction with 286 head being sold. Most significantly were the 86 market beef numbers, which was more than in recent years. Peyton Newton from the Dynamic Livestock 4-H Club repeated showing the Grand Champion lamb from last year and also had the Grand Champion market goat. Her goat set a new record high for the highest price per pound on a bid of \$81.00 by the Ham Family and Ed and Cindy Konrath. The average price per head was down a bit but still a very good result for the exhibitors. Two buyers were recognized for their long-term support of the auction for having purchased animals for 55 years. They were Lucky wishbone and Tucson Electric Power.

There were 124 lots sold in the Small Stock Auction. The overall total of the two sales was \$1,443,814.00.

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POWER FROM THE PAST

Fair manager Jack Murphy invited a few individuals to display their engines at the front entrance gate to the Pima County Fair in 1987. The following year the display grew to include more antique engines and added tractors and a “tractor rodeo” that was held in the west arena. Enthusiasts from Phoenix learned about the Pima County Fair exhibit and began bringing their antique engines and tractors. Because of the quantity of exhibitors, the engines and tractors were placed in the area east of Pima Hall.

By 1991 the first advertising for the tractor and engine show at the Pima County Fair appeared in the trade magazines. To commemorate the event, the first souvenir button was given to members, still considered a collectible for the hat brim.

The exhibit was growing. The “Old West Hall building” was used for displays of other antiques. Using a theme, room displays have demonstrated old hardware stores, a tailor’s shop, county kitchen, a weaving loom, and miniature working engines. “Granny”, a mechanized mannequin, comes every year to demonstrate old washtubs and to just say “Hi!” Rope makers make rope on the porch. And of course, there are benches for sitting and resting.

Just like other old fashioned county fairs, Power From The Past has skillet tosses, mouse trap races, and tractor pulls. On occasion, a field trip is planned to learn about different facets of animal husbandry or farming crops. Power from the Past has excellent cooks that excel in potluck meals. Stew and chili are cooked in an old cast iron pot. Country breakfasts are held every weekend for overnights and ice cream socials are held in the afternoons.

First established as a chapter of the Arizona Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association, the official club, Power from the Past, was formed in 1994. The enthusiasts of engines and tractors decided to do more to show their hobby. Other events were scheduled for exhibition. Shows are scheduled yearly at Kartchner Caverns, Tombstone Helldorado Days, Cochise County Fair, Santa Cruz County Fair, Marana Founders Day Event and Apple Annie’s Orchard. Participation in parades in Green Valley, Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Tucson, and Marana are scheduled annual events.

Tractor pulls and tractor rides are frequent activities that create stories for the annual “Lie and Brag” dinner. Some members tell stories of taking a tractor ride across three states and crossing the Mississippi River. Other members tell stories of rescuing an abandon engine outside a mining ghost town close to the border. Power From The Past’s mission is to collect, restore, exhibit and conduct research on early day engines, tractors, equipment and household items. Many of the club members have certification in engine specialties and serve as an information resource for the community. As a remembrance to the founder, Jerry Rasmussen, there is a windmill at the head of tractor row at the Pima County Fair Grounds.

Power From The Past owns or operates several antique engines that are currently housed on the Pima Fair Grounds. You can see:

- Two 1916 Model Clark Bros. Engines 60 HP, with consecutive serial numbers
- B.V. Nordberg Steam Engine 150 HP
- 1944 Ruston Hornsby Diesel Engine
- No. 2 Austin Mfg. Rock Crusher
- Ireland 54” Circular Saw Mill
- Steam Duplex Pump by Worthington Corp.
- Western 50 HP gasoline engine
- Fairbanks Morse 40 HP model YV diesel engine

Apache Nitrogen Products of St. David has given Power From The Past three matched pieces of equipment. The first given to the club for reclamation was a 1926 Skinner Universal Unaflo 400 HP steam engine with an electrical generator which was first run at the Pima County Fair in April 2003. The second and third matching pieces are to be dismantled in St. David and reassembled on the Pima Fair Grounds at some later date. These two items are: a 1920-30 Ingersoll Rand steam driven 2-stage air compressor and the steam duplex water pump that pumps 1000 gallons per minute used for fire suppression.

At the side of Old West Hall is an assortment of antique farm implements that include a stationary hay press, a Vaughn Drag Saw, wheat binder, and tractor sleds for tractor pulls. On the outside perimeter of the engine displays are a Southbend 13" lathe, a Buffalo Forge Drill Press, and a Chicago Pneumatic Engine compressor. (1)

POWER FROM THE PAST UPDATES

The Power From the Past organization, after having displayed their engines, tractors and other antiques at the Fair since 1987, has decided that the 2017 Fair would be their last at the Pima County Fair. The need to move the location of their exhibits, a decline in membership and the feeling that the Fair was getting to be too long for some of the members all contributed to the decision to begin a new phase for their group in 2018.

Their displays of antiques, the tractor pulls put on by their members, the ropes that they made for the kids, their large engine displays and homemade ice cream for the public all contributed to the success of the Fair for 31 years. It is hoped that some of the individuals from their group will continue to bring some of their engines and antiques to the Fair. Plans have been made to create the necessary space to make this possible.

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HORSE SHOWS

Horse events have always been an important part of fairs and those fairs held in Pima County have been no exception. It is obvious that the early fairs had events representative of those types of horses which were important during their particular time periods. The first Pima County Fair held in 1911 had classes for saddle horses, harness horses, draft horses and ponies. (1) Because of rain on Thursday of the fair, which made it impossible to complete the scheduled horse judging that day, it was decided to extend the fair an extra day until Saturday evening. (2)

Included in the classes listed in the catalog for the 1912 fair for the Horse and Mule Department was a Ladies & Gentlemen's Riding and Driving Contest. (3) The Southern Arizona Fair in 1915 had classes for draft breeds, carriage and coach horses, range saddle horses, farm teams, mules and jacks. (4)

At the 1929 Fair, classes were held for the following: pair jumping, high jump, heavy polo exhibit, cutting horse, guest ranch exhibit, three gaited saddle horse class, children's pony exhibit, park riding for ladies and a Roman race. The contest which attracted the most attention was the high jump which was won by Capt. H. W. Worcester with a jump of four feet six inches riding Capt. Phillip R. Upton's horse Nigger. (5)

It was noted that there was an exceptionally large exhibit of "thoroughbred horses" at the 1934 fair. There were several Arabian mares in addition to many Arizona bred ponies and horses from various riding stables. (6)

The 1948 Pima County Fair was held at the Rodeo Grounds at the same time as the Tucson Livestock Show. The 14th annual horse show was held as a division of the Livestock Show. Over 300 horses were entered in 23 classes. (7) Before a crowd of over 2,000 onlookers, “Thistle”, a 4-year-old red roan stud was awarded the cow horse stallion championship at the show. (8)

From 1960-1974, the Southern Arizona International Livestock Association (SAILA) was responsible for conducting the Pima County Fair. The horse shows conducted during this period of time were more closely associated with SAILA than with the Fair.

Horse shows or rodeos were often associated with the fairs in Pima County in the early years, but that has been less true in recent years. This has been particularly the case since the Southwestern Fair Commission (SWFC) took over the responsibility of conducting the fair in 1975. In recent years, one of the groups that has consistently held horse shows during the fair has been 4-H, which has had shows during the first weekend of the fair. The Mission Valley Saddle Club has put on gymkhanas for many years and theirs has been a regular event at the Pima County Fair since 2005.

With the acquisition of the new site on Houghton Road, it was possible to develop equestrian facilities so that horse events could be conducted as interim events. As a result, next to the fair, horse shows are the second most important segment in the SWFC budget.

Because records of the schedule of events that took place at the fairgrounds between 1975 and 1986 were not retained, determining the history of horse activities during that time frame from that source has not been possible.

At a meeting of the Fair Commission on October 20, 1976, Mr. Rege Ludwig gave a report on the inaugural horse show in the Equestrian Center at the Pima County Fairgrounds on Houghton Road. This was described as the Southern Arizona Arabian Horse Association’s (SAAHA) first annual fall show, which was held on October 15-17, 1976. (9)

For many years, the SAAHA has held the All-Arabian Charity Horse Show in January or early February at the fairgrounds. They also put on another show in the summer or early fall.

The Arizona Paint Horse Club, which was organized in 1970, puts on the Arizona “Copper Country” Paint-O-Rama Horse Show every year. Their first show held in the new Equestrian Center was in December 1978. The fact that the fairgrounds had a new indoor facility was the primary reason that this show was moved from the Scottsdale show grounds. Other than some of the hunter/jumper shows held during the Horse Shows In The Sun (HITS) series, this show is the largest horse show held at the fairgrounds.

This event typically begins just before New Years. It is divided into two separate shows with the one in the last days of December being the largest Paint show in the world and wraps up the show season for the American Paint Horse Association. Another event, starting on January 1, begins the new show year for the Association. Since 2005, they have also been holding a smaller event in May. (10)

There have been a number of Quarter Horse events at the fairgrounds over the years. The Southern Arizona Quarter Horse Association has held shows at the fairgrounds since the early 1980’s. Those events held in March in the early 1990’s were a part of what was called the Blue Ribbon Quarter Horse Circuit.

Hunter Jumper shows have increased significantly in importance over the years to be the most important component of the horse activities which occur at the fairgrounds. In the early 1980’s there were only a couple of these events held each year. In 1986, there were three: The Land of Manana Jumping Horse Show, the Tucson Winter Classic Horse Show

together with the Tucson Grand Prix World Cup and Southern Arizona Trainers Association Hunter/Jumper Show.

In 1994, the Sundance Welcome, the Kachina Classic, and the Sahuaro Classic were added and together with the Arizona Winter Classic made up four consecutive weeks of Hunter Jumper shows. These shows were run by the Southwestern Fair Commission (SWFC) staff.

In 1997, the Arizona Winter Festival and the Arizona Desert Finals were added to make this a six-week series. Beginning in 1998, these shows were put on by Rose View Stables, Ltd. The exception was the Tucson Winter Classic which continued to be managed by the SWFC, who owned the dates for that event. Then, in 2006, the HITS organization took over running the five weeks of shows previously run by Rose View Stables. In 2009, the SWFC reached an agreement whereby HITS would also manage the Tucson Winter Classic for them.

The six weeks of shows are known as the HITS Arizona Winter Classic. A wide variety of hunter/jumper classes are featured for every level of rider from short stirrup to high performance. Some of the season's highlights include a weekly \$25,000 Grand Prix on Sundays, \$4,000 Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper High Classic, \$2,500 Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Low Classic, \$1,500 Marshall & Sterling Children's/Adult Jumper Classic, \$500 Hunter Classic for Children and Adults, \$1,000 Junior Amateur-Owner Hunter Classic and the popular \$350 Bit O'Straw Hunter Classic. (11)

The SWFC owns the dates for the Tucson Fall Classic and the Tucson Fall Festival. The Classic was begun in the late 1980's and the Festival started in the early 1990's. For about a 10-year period from the early 1990's through 2002, the Bel Air Stables Horse Show was held each October at the fairgrounds. In 2007, the Tucson Fall Preview show was added by the SWFC acquiring the dates previously held by the Bel Air Show. These events have been held in late October or November.

Southwest Event Productions began conducting Hunter Jumper Horse Shows at the fairgrounds in 2007 and currently run four of these events a year.

The Tucson Dressage Shows presented by the Tucson Dressage Club have been held at the fairgrounds since 1986. Currently, they hold both a spring and a fall event.

The Southern Arizona Appaloosa Promoters held multiple shows at the fairgrounds each year as early as 1993. However, their numbers began to decrease and as a result they have not held any events there since 2006. The SAILA organization held an all breed horse show in September of each year since the 1980's but because of declining entries also discontinued that show after 2003.

Pima County 4-H groups have held shows at the fairgrounds for many years and continue to do so in early December. These are made up primarily of English and Western classes. 4-H has also held gymkhanas, ropings and sorting events intermittently at the fairgrounds.

Between 1995 and 2000, the Arizona Peruvian Paso Championship was held several times. Various other gymkhanas and a number of smaller shows have also been held at the fairgrounds. (12)

HORSE SHOWS UPDATES

A new series of three horse shows called the Pima Cup began in 2011 that is conducted by SWFC designed to encourage youth in Pima County to participate in hunter jumper horse shows. Since then, the horse show business segment including HITS and the Fall Horse Show series has continued to struggle financially at the Fairgrounds largely due to

the economic downturn. Participation in most of the horse shows have decreased significantly in size but horse shows have continued and remain the most common type of non-fair event held at the Fairgrounds.

The Tucson Fall Horse Shows were reduced from a three-week series to two weeks of USEF sanctioned shows produced by SWFC. The strategy paid off as the November 2015 shows resulted in a resurgence in participation and profitability. The Pima Cup three show series produced by SWFC continued to grow in 2015 with the show held during the annual Pima County Fair the most popular.

During the fiscal year 2015-2016, horse shows at the fairgrounds maintained a steady schedule of events from previous years. However, due to declining participation over recent years, the Fall Horse show series sponsored and managed by SWFC were cut back from three weeks to two. This move helped SWFC to stabilize the Fall Festival and Fall Classic shows with solid participation and reduce expenses allowing the series to realize the best year financially in recent years.

During the fiscal year 2016-2017, horse shows at the fairgrounds maintained a steady schedule of events from those held in previous years. The Fall Horse show series sponsored and managed by SWFC experienced a resurgence in participation and a significant increase in profitability. The HITS winter horse show series experienced a modest increase in participation and profitability.

The horse show business segment including the 2018 HITS and the Fall Horse Show series has finally stabilized financially. Since the reduction of the Fall Horse Shows managed and operated by SWFC from three to two weeks, the shows realized their most profitable event in 10 years. Participation in the Fall Horse Shows has begun to increase after years of declining participation. HITS horse shows did not see any growth in participants but remained similar in size to the previous year. While the HITS show rating decreased from an A to a B show rating, the Fall Shows maintained their A rating for both weeks.

The 2019 Coachella Horse Park Horse Shows (CHPS, formally known as HITS) and the Tucson Fall Horse Shows were down in terms of participants from 2018. Discussion ensued regarding the Fall Shows which were operated by the SWFC regarding whether those shows should continue due to low participation.

The 2020 CHPS shows took place just prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic setting in with low participation. The Tucson Fall Shows were canceled.

The 2021 CHPS horse shows were canceled due to the Pandemic and the Tucson Fall Horse Shows were held under significant restrictions with low turnout.

The 2022 CHPS horse shows and the Tucson Fall Horse Shows were both held with low turnout.

In the spring of 2023, the Southwestern Fair Commission made the decision not to operate and manage the Fall Horse Shows for future years. This difficult decision by SWFC was made after careful review and consideration of recent financials from the lackluster performance from the Fall Shows. A local group chose to take over the Fall Festival and Fall Classic shows and managed the shows in 2023 and 2024.

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AUTOMOBILE RACING

Automobile racing exists in Tucson, Arizona today in the form of Circle Track Racing and Drag Racing. Both types of racing take place at the Pima County Fairgrounds located on Houghton Road. The history of both types of racing in Tucson is quite extensive and each has an interesting history.

CIRCLE TRACK RACING

The very first recorded race in Tucson goes back to 1911 in a race that was loosely described as a track beginning at First Avenue and Speedway Blvd., east on Speedway Blvd. to Wilmot Road, south on Wilmot Road to Broadway Blvd., and then Broadway Blvd. west and back to 1st Ave. (1) In 1911, Speedway Blvd. and Broadway Blvd. did not exist much beyond Campbell Ave. so this was mostly a "race in the desert."

The second recorded race was held in 1915, at a then newly constructed Fairgrounds located in the vicinity of the present Kino Sports Complex with the auto racetrack extending north and close to the Southern Pacific rail lines. The Southern Arizona Fair Association built this new facility on property owned by the Albert Steinfeld family. (2) This was a five-mile oval racetrack. (3)

This race was held on New Year's Day 1915. Dick Clarke won the 102-mile race by covering the five-mile oval in a twenty-lap period. Clarke covered the 102 miles in one hour and fifty-three minutes at speeds up to 35 and 40 mph. Mr. Clark drove Harold Steinfeld's Stutz racer to victory over eight other entrants. The other entrants raced in cars with names like Marmon, Fiat, Buda-Elmore and Buick. A crowd estimated at 3,000 watched the race. (4)

The first recorded race performed during the Southern Arizona Fair happened on March 20, 1915, and the nationally known driver, Barney Oldfield, competed in this race.

(5) The road course for this road race was listed as 4.298 miles. The 24 lap race covered 103.152 miles. Barney Oldfield won this race in just under 1 hour and 32 minutes, an average speed of 67.285 miles per hour. (6)

Any record of racing in the Tucson area seems to go unreported until oval track racing reappeared once more at the Gilpin Sports Stadium. "Walter Douglas Jr. made a racetrack

right in the middle of a cornfield” stated Bill Cheesbourg according to an Arizona Daily Star newspaper article. This was right across the street from Gilpin Airlines on Romero Road. Mr. Cheesbourg and about 60 other interested racers then formed the Tucson Auto and Cycle Racing Association, also known as T.A.C.R.A. (1)

T.A.C.R.A. raced at Gilpin Speedway in the late 1940’s and 1950’s. T.A.C.R.A. members then moved their racing from Gilpin to the Tucson Rodeo Grounds located at South 6th Ave. and Irvington Road in the early 1950’s. Tucson Rodeo Grounds still exists today, but only rodeos are performed there now.

During the racing at the Rodeo Grounds in the early 1950’s, some of these racing events occurred with the annual Pima County Fair. After several years of racing at the Rodeo Grounds, Circle Track Racing moved on to Tucson Speedway in 1957. This location was near Sunset Road and what was then known as the Casa Grande Highway, known today as Interstate 10. Tucson Speedway was owned by the members of T.A.C.R.A. Bob Huff was the Track Manager. This racetrack was opened in 1957 and racing continued there until about 1965. (7)

When Tucson Speedway closed there was a short period of time when Circle Track Racing was again absent in the old Pueblo. Once again, thanks to members of T.A.C.R.A., they entered into a lease agreement for state land at Harrison Road and Dawn Road and began building another racetrack. Work started in June 1967 and the track opened in March 1968. The track was called Corona Speedway and racing there under T.A.C.R.A.’s supervision lasted from 1968 until about 1981. (8)

T.A.C.R.A. was a racing organization that was created by racers for racers. Formed around 1949 by such historical locals as Bill Cheesbourg and Roger McClusky, the organization kept Circle Track Racing going in the Old Pueblo from 1949 to 1982. Doing whatever it took to make it happen, they built tracks and ran races from Gilpin Speedway in the late 1940’s to the Tucson Rodeo Grounds in the 1950s, then at Tucson Speedway during the 1950’s and 1960’s, and finally ending up at Corona Speedway at the Harrison Dawn Road site in 1968. Racing continued there until around 1981 when T.A.C.R.A. ended as an official organization. (9)

From 1981 to 1986 there were various operators at Corona Speedway. From 1981 to 1982 a man named Bob Frakes, in conjunction with T.A.C.R.A.’s name, ran the speed facility. In 1982, Calvin Renard tried his hand at operating the racetrack.

For a short period of time during 1983, from November to December, a struggle with the old T.A.C.R.A. organization failed to keep track going.

From 1984 to 1986 an organization called B.O.P. Incorporated, that was comprised of Jerry Hogan, Mel Bolas and George Shotts, obtained the lease to operate the racetrack, still called Corona Speedway.

In 1987, an enterprising couple named Dave and Linda Manes re-opened the Circle Track Racing at the Fairgrounds and named it Raven Raceway. Dave Manes was an accomplished midget and sprint car driver in his own right.

Dave and Linda Manes worked with the then Executive Director of the Southwestern Fair Commission, Paul Nicholson, to develop a long-term lease for operating the racetrack. A lot of improvements were needed after years of no racing. Raven Raceway opened in 1987, and it was a very successful operation from the beginning. It was a 3/8- mile clay oval.

In 1990, the Manes family sold the leasing rights to Great Western Sports. Great Western Sports is a subsidiary of International Speedway Corporation, which was owned and controlled by NASCAR. With the entry of Great Western Sports into the local Circle

Track Racing scene, more entertainment and excitement elevated auto racing in Southern Arizona. Besides the improvements the Manes family made, Great Western Sports made the racetrack even more exciting and attractive to spectators and racers. The track remained a 3/8-mile clay oval.

The racetrack was renamed Tucson Raceway Park and it still retains that name today. As a sanctioned NASCAR racetrack recognition of local drivers was a possibility, and local driving veterans such as Carl Trimmer were able to achieve prominence. Bill France Jr. was CEO of NASCAR at this period, and his son Brian ran the local track for a year as part of his training. Brian France today is the CEO of NASCAR.

Great Western Sports decided to pave the 3/8-mile clay oval with asphalt in 1993. With good management from Lee Baumgarten and others, Tucson Raceway Park brought national television to the Tucson racing community with a nationally televised show called Winter Heat. This was Stock Car Racing the whole nation could see during the months of December and January.

NASCAR stars of today raced here during Winter Heat in order to get recognition and hopefully move up in the NASCAR ranks. Drivers, including Greg Biffle, Ron Hornaday and Mike Skinner raced at Tucson Raceway Park during Winter Heat.

In January 2002, Great Western Sports decided to get out of owning or leasing small oval racetracks and sold the rights of their lease to an organization called Deery Sports West. Under the direction of David Deery, the 3/8-mile oval asphalt track operated until October 2005.

Dan and Joyce Ruth of Innovative Racing LLC obtained the working lease from Deery Sports West in June 2006 and continued to run the operation until December of 2008. Mark Ebert, with Tucson Racing Enterprises, obtained the lease in February of 2009 and continues to operate the racetrack today as Tucson Raceway Park.

Automotive Circle Track Racing has been conducted on what is now the Pima County Fairgrounds located on Houghton Road since 1968.

There was never more than one circle track operating in the county from racing inception until 2005 when United Sports Arizona, owned by Patrick Robley, opened a 3/8-mile clay oval on the south side of town near Los Reales Road. This is a very nice facility that remains today to serve the interests of Dirt Track Racing fans. (10)

AUTOMOTIVE CIRCLE RACETRACKS IN TUCSON, ARIZONA

1911 - Race on Tucson's desert streets

1915 - Fairgrounds located by 36th Street and Railroad (a.k.a. Steinfeld's Race Track)

1949 - Gilpin Speedway, Romero Road and Prince Ave. area

1951 - Tucson Auto Raceway at the Tucson Rodeo Grounds

1957 - Tucson Speedway, Sunset Road and Casa Grande Highway

1968 - Corona Speedway at Pima County Fairgrounds

1987 - Raven Raceway at Pima County Fairgrounds

1990 - Tucson Raceway Park at Pima County Fairgrounds

2005 - USA Raceway on Los Reales Road

DRAG RACING

Drag racing is an automotive sport that was introduced after World War II. Veterans and non-veterans took a deep interest in modifying their cars to run faster. Some people

thought racing another car in a straight line for about one-quarter of a mile seemed much more interesting than racing another car in a circle. Highly modified chassis with souped up engines started racing each other on the streets and highways of America.

It didn't take long for racers and law enforcement to understand how dangerous this type of racing could be. Racers realized that this activity would need to be performed at special tracks with safety in mind.

In Southern Arizona, a car club by the name of the Lords, helped to promote drag racing in a more organized manner. Car and racing enthusiasts like Red Greth, Don Maynard and Lyle Fisher of the Lords Car Club started drag racing at the private air strip of B.K. Wong's farm in Avra Valley in Marana around 1952. Racing at this private air strip was much more reasonable than racing on public streets and dodging the police.

While some of the drag racing was happening on deserted air strips in the Marana area, illegal drag racing was still happening. In an Arizona Daily Star article dated July 18, 1990, Bonnie Henry wrote about the racing that took place on the old "cut-off to Mt. Lemmon Highway." (11) Here the racers would run from cattle guard to cattle guard for a measured distance.

In 1955, Waldon Burrs Sheriff's Department also broke up several nights of illegal racing held on the old Mission Road on the then Papago Indian Reservation. As more people became interested in drag racing from a racer's and a spectator's point of view, the idea of creating a drag strip closer to Tucson made more sense.

Around 1955, the Lords Car Club, along with the help of others, formed the Tucson Timing Association (TTA). With the help of organizations such as the Tucson Junior Chamber of Commerce, individuals like then current Sheriff Waldon Burr, car dealer Buck O'Reilly and Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, arrangements were made to lease part of an asphalt runway at Davis Monthan Air Force Base for drag racing events. This lasted from about 1956 to the early 1960's.

Sunday, April 29, 1956, was opening day at DM with a crowd of 3,000 spectators. The fastest time of the day was 130 MPH, posted by the team of Greth, Maynard & Fisher. The TTA, under the guidance of people like Fred Blackmore, Jack Barnett and Red Greth, kept the racing going at DM until around April of 1963 when the Air Force said they needed the space for military reasons. In 1964, Lyle Fisher purchased the timing and lighting equipment from TTA and started a new strip called Tucson Dragway in the Houghton Road and Drexel Road area.

From 1964 to 1985 there were several operators of Tucson Dragway at Houghton and Drexel. Lyle Fisher, Bob Huff and Jerald Johns ran the facility at various times. Today, this real estate has been turned into new home development.

In March of 1995, the Southwestern Fair Commission, with Ralph Wong as its President, presented the idea of building a drag strip at the Pima County Fairgrounds. Ironically, Ralph Wong is from the family of B.K. Wong, whose private airstrip let the old Lords Car Club run their cars back in 1952. Ralph Wong, along with the then Executive Director of the Fairgrounds, Jack Murphy, put a proposal together and presented it to the Southwestern Fair Commission.

Mr. Wong also initiated a \$500,000 loan from Pima County, to be paid over ten years with no interest on the loan. The Southwestern Fair Commission, through their financial lenders, provided the rest of the financing to start and complete the project. During the years of 1995, 1996 and 1997 the Southwestern Fair Commission, through an ongoing approval of Phase I and Phase II building plans, continued with the construction of the drag strip.

A contest to name the facility was held with community citizens making suggestions to name the racing facility. The name chosen was Southwestern International Raceway, S.I.R. The Fair Commission in 1997 hired a gentleman named John Hall, from Texas, to be manager of the drag strip. Mr. Hall did a wonderful job of coordinating the work phases during 1997 to get the racing facility completed. Unfortunately, in January of 1998, Mr. Hall left to return to Texas after overseeing the construction of S.I.R.

The opening event for the drag strip was August 17, 1997. Seasoned drag strip operator, Dave Danish, was hired as manager of the racing facility in November of 1998. Wendy Brorsen ran the track from January 23, 2004, to January 25, 2006. In January of 2006, Mike Nervik became manager of the facility.

From its inception in 1995 to its completion in 1997 and up until March 20, 2007, Southwestern International Raceway was financed, managed, and overseen by the Southwestern Fair Commission.

It was decided that, perhaps, an outside entity could have a greater opportunity to more effectively run the facility. The Commission decided to accept bids from interested parties to lease S.I.R. under a long-term contract.

After advertising nationally in various racing magazines, a proposal from S.I.R., LLC was accepted, and a long-term lease of 15 years was granted for them to operate the drag strip. Southwestern International Raceway, LLC is a corporation comprised of partners Tom Koenen and Jon Bradford. They appointed Dennis Sheepstra to be manager of the facility and this group has run the drag strip since March of 2007.

Under their competent management, the drag strip continues to operate today and, hopefully, into the future. (10)

AUTOMOBILE RACING UPDATES

In 2012 a RFP was issued to find an operator for the facility known as Tucson Raceway Park (TRP). The facility had been closed down for approximately a year after the former manager defaulted on their management agreement. The current operator, John Ashley renamed the facility Tucson Speedway and invested a significant amount of money to upgrade and give the track a facelift. As of 2014, attendance at the races has increased significantly and racer car counts have increased. Southwestern International Raceway, SIR, has continued to function and, since 2013, has operated under the direction of a new corporation, International Racing Group (IRG).

The close of 2015 brought yet another change in management at SIR. Jim Hughes and his company, Blue Bayou, LLC., were approved to operate SIR by the Board at the October meeting. Although SIR was affiliated with IHRA, a sanctioning body for drag racing, for the past several years, the new management changed back to the original sanctioning body, NHRA, beginning in 2016.

The current operator at Tucson Speedway, John Lashley, has done an excellent job of building the fan base and the events have solidified loyalty following by fans and drivers.

The current Management Agreement at the drag strip, SIR, expired on December 31, 2016, and Blue Bayou had requested to enter into a new long-term agreement. Since the expiration of the last SIR agreement, SWFC and Blue Bayou have been working on a new agreement which is expected to be finalized by the end of 2017.

The agreement between SWFC and Tucson Speedway operator, John Lashley, will complete the first term of the lease in October of 2017. SWFC is currently working with Mr. Lashley to activate the second term under the agreement that would expire in October

2022.

In the fall of 2017, John Lashley signed a contract extension to operate Tucson Speedway for an additional four years. Jim Hughes and his company, Blue Bayou, LLC., were approved by the Board at the October 2017 meeting to operate the drag strip with a multi-year agreement. The new agreement was sent to the Pima County Board of Supervisors for review and approval and is expected to be made in the Fall of 2018.

In 2020, during the initiation of the COVID-19 Pandemic, both the Tucson Dragway and Tucson Speedway were essentially closed with limited business operations. The State of Arizona and Pima County mass gathering restrictions were so tight that patrons were not allowed at these types of events.

In 2021, the state of Arizona and Pima County lessened some of the mass gathering restrictions, however, the mask mandate remained which put the responsibility of compliance on track management. In order to conduct events, the tracks were required to present written event operation plans to Pima County for review and approval.

In 2022, the mask mandate for mass gatherings was finally removed in March. This allowed the tracks to bring back events and the fans returned in strong numbers. In the Fall, John Lashley signed the next contract term extension to extend through 2027. Jim Hughes at Tucson Dragway would be making that decision in the Spring of 2023. In the spring of 2023, Jim Hughes, manager and operator of the Tucson Dragway, made the decision to extend his agreement with the Southwestern Fair Commission by activating the next term of the current Management Agreement with the Dragstrip. The new term will run through November 1, 2028.

CITATIONS

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SOUTHERN ARIZONA INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK ASSOCIATION

The Southern Arizona International Livestock Association (SAILA) was formed by a group of southern Arizona cattlemen and businessmen interested in the livestock industry. A number of these men had been involved in the Tucson Livestock Show which had begun

in 1935. This event, on February 21-24, 1935, was held in conjunction with Tucson's Mid-Winter Rodeo (La Fiesta de los Vaqueros). (1)(2)(3) It was a Hereford show and sale which had been preceded in 1934 by an exhibit of registered Herefords in conjunction with the rodeo. (4)

The men involved in the Tucson Livestock Show felt that it was in their best interest to form a corporation to protect them individually from liability in case of accidents or disputes. The Articles of Incorporation for SAILA were signed by the incorporators, H. B. Thurber, John K. Goodman and L.V. Robinson on April 27, 1957. The Articles of Incorporation were filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission on May 1, 1957 and the Certificate of Incorporation was issued on May 9, 1957. The first officers were H. B. Thurber: President and Chairman, Jack Goodman: Vice-President and Assistant Secretary, L.V. Robertson: Secretary and Clarence Black: Treasurer. (5)

The general purposes and objectives for which the corporation was formed that were laid out in the Articles included:

- a. to further, through representing its membership, the growing, breeding, and selling of livestock in the State of Arizona and the northern portion of the Republic of Mexico,
- b. to arrange, plan and conduct exhibitions, fairs, shows and cattle sales, and to conduct educational programs and disseminate information relating to the livestock industry,
- c. to encourage the interchange of ideas, information and business and social activities between livestock breeders and growers in the Republic of Mexico and the State of Arizona,
- d. to participate and join with other similar organizations, individuals, municipal, state or national organizations in the conducting of public shows, fairs, exhibitions, etc.,
- e. and in general, to further the interests of the livestock industry as a whole. (5)

For many years, SAILA was primarily known as an Open Class Beef Cattle Show although they also put on an All Breed Horse Show. During the early years, Herefords were the primary beef breed shown but in later years the Southwest Brangus Breeders had the strongest shows. Over the years, SAILA also hosted The SAILA International Stock Dog Classic and The Southwest Bull Classic (an all-breed bull sale).

During the 1960s and early 1970s, there also was an open junior livestock show that was run by SAILA and open to exhibitors from outside of Pima County. At the same time and location, from 1960-1974, the SAILA organization was responsible for conducting the Pima County Fair including their junior livestock shows.

In 1977, The SAILA Junior Market Beef Pre-Fair Show was added to the events held at the Show. This was the beginning of the shift from SAILA being primarily an open class beef cattle show to a junior show open to junior exhibitors statewide. Market lamb classes were added in 1983 followed by the addition of a market swine show in 1992 and market goat classes in 2001. An Open Class Breeding Sheep Show was also added in 1991. (7) In 1984, a series of SAILA sponsored jackpot shows were begun around the state as a means of attracting more young livestock exhibitors to get involved in the SAILA show. These events were also intended to provide additional opportunities for young people to show their livestock at shows other than their local county fairs, the Arizona State Fair or the Arizona National Livestock Show. These events have been held at Sonoita, Douglas, St. Johns, Casa Grande, Yuma and Cottonwood. SAILA Junior Members who compete in the SAILA Junior Show Circuit compete for annual awards. These awards are presented at the SAILA Show which had been held each March at the Pima County Fairgrounds until it was moved to the Pinal County Fairgrounds in 2010 and then to the Buckeye Equestrian Center in 2011.

As the number of open class beef cattle exhibitors declined and cost of putting on the annual show increased, it was decided to terminate the open livestock shows, including the SAILA All Breed Horse Show in 2004. As a result, the spring show for junior exhibitors and the SAILA Circuit Shows are the current events which SAILA sponsors. (8)

The most significant relationship between the Pima County Fair and SAILA was that SAILA had an agreement with Pima County whereby SAILA conducted the Pima County Fair annually from 1960 through 1974. The fairs from 1960 through 1971 were held at the South 6th Avenue Rodeo Grounds. Beginning with the 1972 fair, the Pima County Fair was moved to the current fairgrounds on South Houghton Road. After the 1974 fair, the Pima County Board of Supervisors decided to appoint a new Pima County Fair Commission, the first members of which formed a non-profit corporation, the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. Consequently, the Southwestern Fair Commission conducted the next fair in 1975 and is still doing so at this time. (9)

The SAILA organization also had the responsibility for conducting the Pima County Fair and Race Meet during the 1960-74-time period.

Most of the SAILA shows held in Tucson were in mid-March. However, in 1989-90 SAILA once again held its open show in conjunction with the Pima County Fair in April. It may have been held together in additional years but incomplete records made it difficult to verify that.

Funding for the SAILA shows comes primarily from the County Fairs Livestock and Agriculture Promotion Fund, often referred to as the "Governor's Fund".

Past presidents of SAILA have been Harold B. Thurber, Walter Fathauer, W.J. "Biff" Baker, Wayne Pruett, Joe Maierhauser, James McDonald III, Tim Cox, John Condon, Barbara S. Jackson, and William A. Schurg. Edwin J. Konrath, Jr. is the current president.

Harold B. Thurber served intermittently as general manager of SAILA from 1957- 1983. In 1963, John W. (Bud) Ferris was appointed as year-round general manager of SAILA and the Pima County Fair. (10) Other general managers have been: Edwin M. Kruse: 1984-86, Barbara Stevenson Jackson: 1987-89, and Tor Sorensen: 1990-to date. (11)

SOUTHERN ARIZONA INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK ASSOCIATION UPDATES

After an absence of two years, the SAILA Junior Show returned to the Pima County Fairgrounds for their spring show on March 10-11, 2012. This trend continued as SAILA again held their spring shows at the Fairgrounds in 2016-2019.

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RODEOS

A bronco-busting contest was held during the first Pima County Fair in 1911. According to an article in *The Tucson Citizen*, “there were plenty of riders and plenty of bad horses”. Included in the entries were at least two women bronco-busters. (1)

Cowboys entering the bronco riding contest at the 1917 Southern Arizona Fair not only had to pay a \$5.00 entry fee but they also had to provide their own horse. However, the winner won \$100. There was also a calf tying event in which the first-place contestant earned \$150. (2)

Those Pima County Fairs held from 1929-1942 were held in conjunction with La Fiesta de los Vaqueros. While the rodeo was not an integral part of the fair they were held at the same time and location. The fairs from 1949-1971 were held at the Rodeo Grounds on South 6th but not in conjunction with the rodeo.

In a first, the Girls’ Rodeo Assn. put on two all-girl rodeo performances each day at the 1975 fair. (3)

At an October 1976 meeting of the Southwestern Fair Commission, approval was given for the Arizona Junior Rodeo Association to hold an approved event at the 1977 fair. An article in the *Arizona Daily Star* in 1977 indicated that it was the ninth annual junior rodeo that was being held. It was the first time this event had been held at the Houghton Road fairgrounds. The Tucson Active 20-30 Club was the sponsor of this event for many years. (4)(5)

Between the mid 1980’s and the mid 1990’s the Arizona Junior Rodeo Association held a number of events at the fairgrounds other than at the fair. This included the Arizona High School Rodeo Finals from June 4-6, 1993.

The All-Police Rodeo and the 21 DPS Rodeo both took place in October a number of times between 1987 and 2000. Occasional Team Roping events have also taken place at the fairgrounds.

From March 3-April 3, 2005, the Pima County Fairgrounds was the site of the National Reined Cow Horse Show. (6)

RODEO UPDATES

On the last weekend of the Fair in 2014, the Grand Canyon Pro Rodeo Association (GCPRA) sponsored a rodeo at the Fair for the first time. The GCPRA is the largest pro rodeo association in Arizona. It was very successful and, as a result, returned again in 2015-2017, and is growing each year in both contestants and spectators.

CITATIONS

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HORSE RACING

Horse racing at the fairs in Pima County got off to a fairly modest start at the first fair in 1911. Included at that fair were races for ponies under 14 hands, ridden by boys under 15 years of age. The race consisted of three gaits with one lap around the track at a walk, the second at a trot and the third at a gallop. (1)

With the addition of a half mile track at the new property acquired prior to the Southern Arizona Fair in 1915, harness racing was one of the attractions at that fair as well as in 1916. Races were held for both trotters and pacers. (2) The 1916 fair also included "Cow Horse Races" as well as a "Ladies' Cow Horse Race". (3)

At the Southern Arizona Fair in 1917, races were held for Indian and Cow Ponies at distances of 300 yards, ¼ mile and ½ mile. For the Cow Pony races, an entry fee of \$5.00 was charged with the winners receiving 50, 70 or 100 dollars for the respective distances. (4)

Western horse racing "featuring all of the top Quarter Horses in the West" were run at the 1948 Pima County Fair at the Rodeo Grounds on South Sixth Avenue. (5) Miss Princess, at that time the holder of the world's record for 440 yards at 22.2 seconds, was one of the top choices in the World Championship Quarter Horse race at that distance. (6) Before a record-breaking crowd of approximately 8,500 fans she won the race at just one tenth second off of her record. (7)

Both "Quarter horse and Thoroughbred" racing was held for two days during the 1949 fair at the Rodeo Grounds. (8) An article in the October 15, 1950, *Arizona Daily Star* stated that "An eight-race program will usher in the 1950-51 racing season this afternoon at the Tucson Fair Grounds track on South Sixth Avenue". It went on to state that "Held in conjunction with the Pima County Fair, the races will continue for three Sundays. Next Sunday the meeting will be run while the Fair is in progress". (9) This apparently was the last year that horse racing was held at the same location as the fair itself.

In 1951, Quarter Horses and Thoroughbred were again raced during the Pima County Fair as well as the following two weekends. (10) That year the races were held at the Rillito Racetrack on North First Avenue. (11) The opening day of racing on Sunday, October 21st featured a 400-yard event for Quarter Horses of all ages. The purse for the Pima County Premier Stake was \$500 plus eight per cent of the mutual handle. (12)

During the period from 1960-1974, the Southern Arizona International Livestock Association, headed by Harold Thurber, conducted the Pima County Fair race dates. All of these races were held at Rillito Racetrack.

The Southwestern Fair Commission (SWFC) had the responsibility for the Pima County Fair Race dates from the time of their formation in 1975 until 1987. According to the December 19, 1975, SWFC minutes, it was "RESOLVED that the agreement negotiated with Rulon Goodman to operate the Pima-Pinal County Fair race dates for 1976 at Rillito Race Track be approved". (13) The Pima County Fair race dates continued to be held at

Rillito Racetrack through 1982. (14)

Because of the closing of the Rillito Race Track, Pima County did not have a Fair Meet for the 1983 season.(15) At their September 21, 1987 meeting, the SWFC approved a contract with the Santa Cruz County Fair to hold future Pima County Fair race dates at the Santa Cruz race track in Sonoita.(16) Following that, at the December 1, 1987 meeting of the Commission, Paul Nicholson reported that the Board of Supervisors had appointed a five member County Fair Racing Board to be in charge of county fair racing. Thus, the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc. would no longer be involved in horse racing. (17)

CITATIONS

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FAIRGROUNDS INTERIM EVENTS

The Pima County Fairgrounds is the home to many events, some reoccurring and some onetime events. From dog shows to RV Rallies, there are many groups that utilize the facilities.

Coyote Classic Dog Show: This is one of the biggest and longest running events that takes place at the fairgrounds. This annual event utilizes the largest building on the grounds, Old Pueblo Hall, and the large grass field. In addition, several hundred participants with their RV's come in and set up shop.

RV Rallies and Shows: In recent years large RV travel groups, such as Good Sam, Airstream, Escapees and Holiday Ramblers, have utilized the fairgrounds due to the large number of RV sites available, approximately 400. These groups look for banquet halls, meeting rooms, and stage areas which are all available. In addition, RV shows have become popular and are scheduled on a regular basis.

Vail Pride Days: One of our largest events that take place annually is the Vail School District sponsored event, Vail Pride Days. This event runs over a 3-day period and features student art, displays, performances, fund raising and more.

Livestock Shows: Livestock shows of all types occur at the fairgrounds as well as rabbit and poultry show. These shows draw from local, regional and in some cases national participants.

Other: Other events that occur at the fairgrounds from time to time include gun shows, tool shows, rodeos, model train shows, and more.

FAIRGROUNDS INTERIM EVENTS UPDATES

Since 2011, the Interim Events held at the fairgrounds has realized a major swing in the type of events held. Concerts, which had been a mainstay of operations at the Fairgrounds, have been few and far between. Instead, RV related events became very popular. La Mesa RV, a local RV dealer in Tucson, began conducting 6 to 8 RV shows per year. In addition, with the improvements at the fairgrounds related to RV parks and catering capabilities, RV Rally organizers have been attracted to the Fairgrounds for their gatherings. Several rallies have been held or contracted to be held in the next few months and years.

March of 2015 brought to the fairgrounds the Escapees RV Rally that was a tremendous success with approximately 800 RV's on-site over the weeklong gathering. The success of the rally confirmed what was determined in the 2011 Master Planning process that RV related events were a viable opportunity for the future of fairgrounds. In the fall of 2015, the much-anticipated Pima County Bond Election was held and was defeated by a large margin. SWFC had two projects that were included in the Bond Package. Project one was to improve Old Pueblo Hall by insulating the entire 61,000 sq. ft. building. In addition, about one-third of the building was to be sectioned off with moveable dividers to provide climate-controlled meeting rooms, office space and a storage room. Americans with Disabilities Act compliant restrooms were also to be added.

Project two was to rehabilitate the old 4-H RV Park for RV Rally organizers and Fair users by including a new restroom & shower building, adding sewer connections to all sites and increasing power at each site to 50 amps. SWFC had set aside \$1.3 Million Dollars for their contribution to these and other projects included in the Bond Election. With the election failure, utilizing some of these funds, SWFC budgeted to complete the two projects during 2016.

In anticipation of these two projects being completed by the end of 2016, the Escapees RV Rally organization signed an agreement to hold their 2017 club rally at the Pima County Fairgrounds in March 2017. In addition, they signed similar agreements for additional rallies to be held over the next 10 years. Completing the above-mentioned projects will also make it likely that additional rallies will be attracted to utilize the Fairgrounds facilities.

The interim event business segment has continued to grow, most notably due to the completion of the Old Pueblo Hall Conference and Event Center and the 4-H RV Park improvements. With these improvements, the Escapees RV Rally returned to the

fairgrounds in March 2017. This rally featured approximately 900 rigs on the peak day of the 5-day rally. These improvements allowed us to accommodate their needs and the size of their group and work toward four additional rallies contracted with SWFC in 2019, 2021, 2023 & 2025. These improvements and the success of the Escapee Rally has allowed us to contract with three additional RV Rally groups for the 2017-2018 fiscal year including FMCA, Tiffin & Freightliner.

Other interim events that had significant impact of the success of the Interim Event & Concert business segments include the La Mesa RV Shows, Gem & Jam Music Festival, Crossroads of the West Gun Shows and The Coyote Classic Dog Show.

Several new large-scale events were conducted at the Fairgrounds in the winter of 2018. In January the Jurassic Quest Dinosaur exhibit drew large crowds over a three-day period. The animatronic dinosaurs were extremely popular with the public and the promoter has resigned to come back in January of 2019.

Three new RV Rallies were held at the Fairgrounds. Two in February were the Family Motor Coach Association (FMCA) regional club rally (400 coaches) and the Tiffin Motor Coach Association regional club rally (300 coaches). In March, the Freightliner Chassis RV Club conducted a week-long rally (250 coaches). Members of the FMCA group approached SWFC staff about conducting the FMCA national rally in coming years that could bring approximately 2,500 coaches.

In March of 2020 the much-anticipated FMCA RV Rally was canceled due to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This set off a flurry of cancelations for Interim Events lasting until March of 2021. Pima County guidelines were very restrictive, and the mask mandates were difficult for staff to manage as some participants and attendees refused to wear them. For this reason, the number of events was limited as many promoters did not want the responsibility of managing their participants or attendees.

In March of 2021, Pima County lessened some Pandemic restrictions and allowed mass gathering events, but the mask mandate remained. Some event promoters returned and agreed to follow the requirements while others chose to take their events to other Arizona counties with lesser restrictions.

In March of 2022, Pima County removed the mask mandate and SWFC once began to contract a large number of events.

In 2023, a good variety of events were contracted to give the Fairgrounds a full interim event schedule. The Escapee RV Club returned for its five rallies over the past 10 years. In addition, several equestrian events were added to the schedule including the Sherry Cervi Barrel Race championships, Extreme Barrel Race and the local Southern Arizona Barrel Racing Association (SABRA) which conducted several events at the Fairgrounds. The Gem & Jam Music Festival brought an eclectic group of bands (mainly EDM genre) and attendees for the January event was approximately 6,000 guests.

In 2024, we had the most successful Interim Event year ever. The Family Motor Coach Association (FMCA), RV Rally, produced their RV Rally with approximately 1,600 coaches per day. The Gem & Jam Music Festival returned with a three-day music festival. Equestrian events have evolved to a more western based type of event with several barrel race events including the Sherry Cervi three-day championship. Other events included four Crossroads of the West gun shows, the Tucson Dog Show, and several small RV Rallies.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS, RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS

This section is being added in 2025 to record the many accomplishments, recognitions and awards received by the Pima County Fair, the SWFC, SWFC Board or Staff members as well as Fair supporters.

1977-The building, then named the 'New Products Building', was renamed 'H. B. Thurber Hall' in honor of Harold B. Thurber. (See 2011 Pima County Fair Hall of Fame bio)

1977-The 'Equestrian/Livestock Complex' at the Fairgrounds was named 'The Castro Livestock Center' in recognition of Governor Raul H. Castro. (See 2012 Pima County Fair Hall of Fame bio) In 1980, the name was again changed to the 'Governor's Livestock and Equestrian Center'.

2001-The 'West Arena' was renamed 'Manny's Arena' in honor of Arturo Manuel Nunez, Maintenance Foreman and longtime employee.

2004-Jon Baker, Executive Director, received the Arizona Fairs Association Fair Manager of the Year recognition. He had previously also won the award in 1996.

2005-The Pima County Fair was Honored for Contemporary Holocaust Memorialization for the Holocaust Exhibition at the Fair.

2007-A miniature windmill was placed at the head of 'tractor row' in honor of Jerry Rasmussen in his memory for his long term involvement with Power from the Past. (See 2013 Pima County Fair Hall of Fame bio)

2006-2007-Jon Baker, Executive Director, was elected president of the Arizona Fairs Association (AFA). He had previously held the same position in 1990-1992 and was again elected as president in 2022-2023. He is the only person to be elected president of the AFA three times.

2008-At the Western Fairs Association (WFA) Convention, Pima County Fair won 1st Place in both Cultural Marketing and Innovative Advertising on entries by Launa Rabago, Marketing and Entertainment Manager.

2008-The Pima County Fair received an Award of Gratitude, World Vision, Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation.

2009-Jon Baker, Executive Director, was elected as president of the Western Fairs Association.

2012-A permanent neon sign saying 'JIMMY'S BAR' in remembrance of James T. Grimes was placed in the Cantina. (See 2011 Pima County Fair Hall of Fame bio)

2013-Jon Baker, Executive Director, was inducted into the Arizona Fairs Association Hall of Fame.

2014-The Pima County Fair hosted both the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) Management Conference as well as the WFA Feature Fair Tour.

2014-The 'Hall of Champions' in the Livestock Barn was renamed the 'Jean Buzzard Hall of Champions' in honor of her. (See 2011 Pima County Fair Hall of Fame bio)

2014-At the IAFE Convention, Pima County Fair received Honorable Mention for it's Anti Bullying, "Words Hurt" campaign in the Multi-Cultural Marketing Category on the entry by Marketing and Entertainment Manager Launa Rabago.

2015-Jon Baker, Executive Director, completed all of the requirements of the International Association of Fairs and Exposition for the Certified Fair Executive (CFE) designation.

2017-Jon Baker, Executive Director, was inducted into the Western Fairs Association Hall of Fame.

2017-Phyllis Ellis, Concessions Manager, graduated from IAFE's Institute of Fair Management.

2018-At the IAFE Convention, the Pima County Fair won 3rd Place in the Use of a Theme Throughout Multiple Divisions of Competitive Exhibits on the entry by Operations Manager Julia Casillas.

2019-Phyllis Ellis, Vendor & Events Coordinator, received the Arizona Fairs Association 'Fair Member of the Year' award.

2019-At the IAFE Convention, the Pima County Fair won 3rd Place in the Use of a Theme Throughout Multiple Divisions of Competitive Exhibits as well as the Award of Excellence in Agricultural Exhibitor Events, Awards, Participation Incentives, or Retention Programs on entries by Operations Manager Julia Casillas.

2021-At the IAFE Convention, the Pima County Fair won 1st Place in the Rental Event for it's Motor Trend filming project.

2023-At the IAFE Convention, the Pima County Fair won the Outstanding Competitive Exhibits Award for the Use of a Theme Throughout Multiple Divisions of Competitive Exhibits on the entry by Operations Manager Julia Casillas.

2024-The ramada adjacent to the Livestock Barn was named the 'Dr. Marvin and Patsy Selke Livestock Ramada' in their honor for 60 years of dedicated volunteer service to the Fair.

2024-The Pima County Fair won the 1st Place Copper Cactus Award, Diversity and Inclusion Champion, from the Tucson Chamber of Commerce and Wells Fargo.

2024-Launa Rabago won 3rd Place Talent Buyer, Fairs and Festivals, International Buyers Association.

2024-At the WFA Convention, in the Recognition of Excellence category, the Pima County Fair received 2nd Place for 'New Program or Event Designed to Accommodate the Disabled Community' and Honorable Mention for 'Creative Promotions to Combat Inflation in the Fair Industry' on entries by Launa Rabago, Marketing and Entertainment Manager. Launa also received a Certificate of Appreciation for 20 years of Dedicated Service as a Contributing Member of WFA.

2024-Julia Casillas, Operations Manager, graduated from IAFE's Institute of Fair Management.

2024-Marvin Selke, Emeritus Member, was an IAFE Heritage Award recipient. (See 2011 Pima County Fair Hall of Fame bio)

2024-At the IAFE Convention, the Pima County Fair won 2nd Place in Agricultural Awards, 2nd Place in Competitive Exhibits Awards and 3rd Place in Non-Fair Facility Usage. This was the result of the combined Staff's efforts.

2025-At the Western Fairs Convention, the Pima County won 2nd Place in Class 15, New Programming Designed to Accommodate the Disabled Community for our Advocacy for the Disabled Program.

2025-The Pima County Fairgrounds won the Golden Spike Award in tourism from the Vail Chamber of Commerce.

2025-The Pima County Fair won 2nd Place in the Agricultural Awards, Any Other Agriculture Program/Exhibit, for transforming the old playhouse into an AG Sorting Playhouse where children learn to sort items into recycle, compost, and trash bins. Th Fair also received 3rd Place in the Competitive Exhibits Awards, Special Contest-Farm Themed Art Extravaganza Contest, which was recognized for its creativity and engaging approach to agricultural-themed art. Both entries were submitted by Operations Manager Julia Casillas.

2025-Launa Rabago, Marketing and Entertainment Manager, graduated from IAFE's Institute of Fair Manageme