A historical view of the Association
The Yorkton Exhibition Association and the Yorkton Fair itself have a long and significant association with this area. The fair and the association have grown and changed as Yorkton itself has grown and progressed.

When Agricultural Societies were first organized in this province in 1883, the Yorkton community quickly formed a Society, which was among the first in the province to receive a charter. At that time, Yorkton was nothing but a huddle of tents, a few frame buildings, and a gristmill, located on the banks of the Little White Sand River. At that time the settlement was part of the Northwest Territories, and without a railroad.

The very first Yorkton Fair was held the following year on September 9, 1884 at the Yorkton Farmer’s Colonization Company’s old town site - located four miles from the present Exhibition grounds. That fair was the first social event of the settlement, and such a success that an annual event has been held every year since without exception.

Early fairs had a strong desire to bring the settlers first hand information on the most desirable agricultural practices for their locality.
Yorkton’s first fair included exhibits of cattle, hogs, 30 yoke of oxen, one team of horses and some women’s work. They were always fall fairs, and for the most part were held in early October.

The CPR tracks to Yorkton were completed in 1891. The original townsite and the fairgrounds were re-located at that time to be nearer to the rail line. A small racetrack was constructed at the new fairground site, and livestock pens were located north of Broadway Street and Betts Avenue, now part of downtown Yorkton.

Unfortunately much of the very earliest history of the society have been lost or destroyed. Only a few details and stories handed down remain of the first ten years of the Yorkton Agricultural Society’s existence. But commencing in July of 1983, the minute books of the society are available, carefully recorded by fountain pen in the script of a bygone era. And from those minutes we learn of the issues and decisions of those earliest settlers, who believed that an agricultural society was an important, perhaps even vital part of making a community in those Northwest Territories.

Those early minutes tie the past to the present - for the directors have names that continue to be associated with this area. Insinger, Collacott, Snell, Hopkins, Buchanan, Carson, Garry, Reid, McFarline, Reusch, Peaker, Simpson, Livingstone, Sharp, Bull. Their names live on - a lasting tribute to those who made such a strong contribution to this city, long before it became a city.

That very first meeting for which minutes still exist, show a board of directors looking toward the future with the expectation of growth. The July 8, 1983 minutes contain a motion to set aside $50 annually toward a building fund. And it wouldn’t be too many years before those funds were put to use.

The entries for that Fall Show held in October of 1893 reveal a broad range of competitions. Heavy draught stallion, brood mare with foal by her side (both over and under 1300 lbs.) spring colt or filly (from mares both over and under 1300 lbs.), and saddle horses were just some of the eighteen classes of exhibition for horses. Twenty sections for cattle, along with exhibits of long wooled sheep, pigs, geese, turkeys, ducks and spring chickens rounded out the livestock. Various categories of grains, roots and vegetables were also displayed. The Class “Dairy Produce” included exhibits of butter, cheese, bread, fruitcake and preserves.

Patchwork quilts, rag mats, handmade woolen shirts, embroidery, crochet, woolen socks and mitts, homemade underclothes, fancy work and homemade yarn came under the heading “Ladies Work Class”. And intriguingly, exhibits of copybooks by age and sex - girls and boys ages under 14
years, under 12 and under 10 were also part of the show. Many these days might consider a return to some pride in this undertaking to be a step in the right direction.

The early directors didn’t operate under Robert’s Rules of Order (which had been published some seventeen years prior). Later minutes from 1893 show a motion that a declaration made by the widow of a gentleman who owed the society a debt that “she and her daughter had witnessed a director of the association receiving a partial payment from her husband on his deathbed” was “without foundation and untrue”. It was likely an overstepping of what can properly be determined by motion, but their intent not to accept the explanation is plain.

The directors decided to add a spring exhibition in 1894, and a general stock fair was held in Yorkton on May 9, 1894 for the purpose of bringing buyers and sellers together. A charge of 10¢ per head was set for all animals submitted.

The regular fall fair was scheduled for October 4th of that year, but due to bad weather an emergency directors meeting was held on that date, determining to postpone the fair to the 11th. It was the first at which judges, directors and exhibitors were supplied with identification ribbons. Small changes took place from year to year with respect to the specifics of competitions available, with additions and subtractions in the grain and cattle classes. Homemade pickles were added to the list in 1894, not to mention the rather lengthily described category of ‘the largest collection of gopher tails secured by members of one family, not less than 200 tails to secure prize. Tails to be the property of the Society.’

Directors and judges volunteered their time and expertise with very little reward in the early days. Some fairs went smoothly, while others produced problems. At the meeting following the 1895 fair there were three protests recorded. One was in the Pure-Bred Cattle category - an entrant claimed that the winner was not the bona fide owner of the animal. The other two protests were in the ever sensitive area of milk ownership - one woman claimed that another entrant had used milk from another person’s cows to make her cheese, while another protested that a fellow competitor had made her rolls using someone else’s milk.

A later meeting reveals that ownership of the cattle was satisfactorily verified, while both milk complaints were justified. The cheese incident was determined to be a mistake made in ignorance of the rules, but the rolls protest was found to not only be justified but a deliberate act of malfeasance, and the woman was duly banned from entering future competitions.
1896 was a quiet year in terms of exhibitors’ complaints, but the 1897 fair again saw three protests. All were found to be well grounded, although two provide no details. The third involved the patchwork quilt competition - it is unknown whether the work was not the competitor’s, or whether it was perhaps another ownership issue - did she use someone’s else’s fabric scraps?

Early 1896 saw a motion to acquire a new piece of land for the Exhibition grounds, and in May of that year the purchase of 10 acres of land at a price of $10 per acre was approved. The earliest recorded history of a plowing competition appears in the minutes of September 19, 1896, where it is indicated that it would be held the afternoon prior to fair day, with each competitor plowing 1/4 acre. Plowing matches were designed to educate farmers in one of the important field practices at the time.

The Secretary Treasurer of the society was the single paid staff position in those days, and his remuneration was only set retroactively. The minutes of the first meeting of each year reveal a motion to pay the Secretary Treasurer for his services in the previous year. For 1893 the position received the sum of $25, but in each of 1894, 1895, 1896 and 1897 the payment was $35.

All in all, the directors spent more time actually doing the work of the society than holding meetings. Generally there were only four to six meetings held per year, but they were very involved in planning and putting on the annual fair. By 1897 they were rewarded for their efforts with free meal tickets at the fair.
The early years saw the Board of the Society spending a good deal of their time dealing with the nuts and bolts of the annual fair. Each year’s minutes record discussion of the prize list for the next fair, the naming of the judges for each class of events, and following the fair the inevitable protests received from unhappy entrants.

The dates of the fair were the subject of much discussion. For the first time in 1899, the Directors considered holding the fair in July. In February, after much discussion of possible dates in September, the fair was set for July, but by April the Directors reversed themselves, and the fair was again held on a Thursday in September.

A similar process occurred in 1900, with the fair being set for July and later moved to early October. In part the move to October was so that advantage could be taken of the offer of the North West Government to provide expert judges in the live stock classes for Yorkton and surrounding fairs. In 1901 the fair was finally held in mid July and expanded to two days. In the years following, the fair was held in mid or early July, and, with the exception of 1902 when the Society put on a three day event, it was a two day show.
It was a time of growth and expansion for the Yorkton Agricultural Society, and the Board was intent on making improvements to the fair and the grounds each year. In the years before the turn of the century the Society used the stock yards of Manitoba & North West Railway Company and Meredith Hall for show.

But they were planning for their own facilities. In 1898 the annual amount set aside for the building fund was increased to $75. At a special meeting of the members held June 16, 1900 a motion was passed to “grant the powers to the directors to borrow money upon security of the society for building purposes.”

Just what land, and how much land, would be best suited to the needs of the Agricultural Society remained a matter of discussion and decision. In March of 1901 the members authorized the directors “to lease for more than one year, mortgage or sell the land currently held and to acquire in fee simple another parcel of land, not more than 25 acres, suitable for the needs and purposes of the Society, and to take a mortgage on the same, and to fence and erect suitable buildings on the same.” The land purchased six years earlier was no longer deemed appropriate.

Later that year the Board agreed to purchase the land which they were using as a race track, owned by the Manitoba and North Western Railway and John J. Smith, and sufficient additional land owned by Thomas Meredith immediately to the south of the race track to meet the requirements of the Society. The details of the land purchase were as follows: 13.5 acres at $65/acre from Meredith, 44 lots from JJ Smith at $20/lot and 43 lots from F.J. Griffin C.P.R. Land Commission at $15 each, for a grand total of $2402.50.

There was a bit of exchanging of land with neighbouring land owners over the next couple of years to better meet the needs of the Society, but the land which was purchased at this time was essentially what is now known as Jubilee Park in the City of Yorkton.

The following years saw many improvements made to the grounds. A 48 x 84 foot building with two 14 foot wings was erected as an Exhibition Hall. A turn style for the grand stand was ordered, a modern judges’ stand was built. A Directors’ Office was built at an approved cost of $120.

In 1906 a regulation 1/2 mile track was laid out, and the grandstand moved to the west side of the track. A number of permanent booths were erected under it to enable outside exhibitors to better display their exhibits. The work was tendered as a package, and a contract entered for $1420.

Over the years, the Society became involved in a variety of other events in addition to the annual fair. 1905’s minutes show the first mention
of a Plowing Match and Farmers’ Picnic put on under the auspices of the Society, which was held in June of that year on the farm of William Spiers of Yorkton. In 1907 the Society hosted a spring stallion show in April, and January 1908 records the first seed show put on under the auspices of the Society.

In 1903 the Board made a motion that the Society was in favour of experiments to ascertain how much seed should be sown on different soils and that experiments be made on fodder crops. They set a committee to conduct co-operative agricultural experiments, and decided that year to experiment on 1/4 acres of Timothy and Clover, 1/4 acre native Rye grass, 1/2 acre Brome grass, 1/4 acre Alfalfa, Rape, 1 acre each of two and six rowed malting barley.

1900 was the first year which records any discussion of a combined sports and agricultural show. By 1903 prizes for athletic competitions included $3 for men’s 100 yard dash, $2 for the 220 yard men’s race and $5 and $3 for the men’s half mile race. In 1904 first prize for Football and Baseball was $40, by 1907 the prize money had been increased to $100.

Transportation for exhibitors and attendees in the district was also a concern. In 1901 the Board accepted an offer of the C.P.R. Company to run a special train from Winnipeg on show dates, on a guarantee from the Society that the company’s earnings would not be less than $600. The special trains didn’t always run on time - the special excursion train due in before noon on final day of the fair arrived in late afternoon, prompting a request to be made for a rebate to cover the loss of gate receipts.

1901 also records the first mention of side shows, when the Board set the price for space for side shows at $25 and for merry-go-rounds at $50. Little mention is made in the early years of the attractions arranged for the midway, but in several of those years a committee of two directors would travel to Winnipeg to find suitable attractions.

By 1902, refreshment stands at the east and west ends of stand were let by public auction, at recorded selling prices of $48 and $28, all other refreshment stands were charged $10 a day.

In 1909 the Presbyterian Ladies Aid paid $40 for the exclusive privilege of supplying meals during the fair.

Finances were such that the Society needed to take a promissory note to pay the prize money for 1901. By 1908, the directors had begun what would become a common occurrence over the years - taking personal responsibility for the debts of the Society. In that year, two directors - Parsons and Diner - give a personal note of $200 so that the amount of the
shortfall owing the C.P.R. for special trains could be paid. Later that year a group of directors signed a note guaranteeing $800.

The poor state of the Society’s finances led the Board to decide to forego both the stallion show and the seed show in 1909.

At a general meeting of the Society on November 15, 1909 a motion to transfer all property, assets and liabilities of the Yorkton Agricultural Society to a limited company, to be incorporated under the name the Yorkton Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition Association Limited, was passed unanimously.

Incorporation took place promptly, with a board of fifteen directors, including a representative from the Board of Trade (the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce) and the Mayor of Yorkton. William Simpson, a former Yorkton councillor, purchased the first $10.00 share in the Association, and became its first President.
While the fair was officially incorporated at the end of 1909, there was still work to be done to complete the re-organization. The first secretary manager of the Exhibition Association was hired in early 1910, and an office was rented shortly thereafter in the Enterprise Building at $15 per month.

The first committees of the Exhibition Association were set up early in the new year as follows: Excursion and Transportation, Finance, Gates, Grandstands and Privileges, Attractions, Publicity and Advertising, Sports and Racing. Bylaws for the corporation were approved in March of that year. Once incorporated, regular business meetings became the order of the day. The minute book records 21 meetings of the Board of Directors for the year 1910.

Although new grounds had been purchased fairly recently (1900) there was already a lot of talk about another move. It was a matter of some contention, and a special meeting was held in August of 1910 to receive a delegation of farmers on the topic. Mr. J. Caldwell, chairman of the delegation, delivered to the Board a letter signed by 26 farmers, which stated...
as follows: “The undersigned, former members of the Yorkton Agricultural Society... are opposed to any steps being taken looking towards the transferring or disposition of the present grounds.”

Apparently the Board did not consider the objection to be well founded, as they proceeded later that same month to take an option on eighty acres of land belonging to Levi Beck, and tendered the old grounds. No tenders were received on the old grounds, and that purchase didn’t proceed.

By 1912, the Association had made a deal with the York Farmers Colonization Co. for the purchase of 40 acres at $500 per acre. That 40 acres, along with an additional 28 acres of land purchased later from the company, comprises the current fair grounds.

The old grounds were sold to a group of investors led by a Mr. Toohill (the ‘Toohill Syndicate’) in June of 1912, at the price of $45,000, with the Association taking back a vendor mortgage. Buildings were moved from the old grounds to the new.

Payments on the Toohill mortgage, and consequently on the Association’s own agreement for sale were slow, and by July of 1918 the amount still owing by the Exhibition was $32,221.27. At that time the York Farmers Colonization Co. offered to reduce the debt to $18,000 if the Association could pay $1,000 cash and $1,000 per annum. As they couldn’t come up with the cash nothing was done, and by July of 1919 York Farmers were prepared to take $15,000 comprised of $1,500 cash plus $1,000 per year. Finances were better in 1919, and the Association not only came up with the $1,500 cash required, but managed another $2,000 payment before year’s end.

Some buildings were moved from the old site, but there was plenty of construction on the new site in these years. A racing stable with 20 stalls, two stables to accommodate 50 horses, a race track and fencing of the grounds were first on the agenda. In 1914, Ritchie and Watters of Portage la Prairie was awarded the tender to erect a grand stand at a cost of $7,700. A stable for cattle and one for pigs and sheep followed, and the old dining hall was fixed up as a poultry house. A gateway was installed on Broadway to use as the main entrance.

Finances were often difficult, and the Association approached Town Council on several occasions suggesting the Town take over the fair grounds. The records don’t indicate any interest on the Town’s part, and the matter was dropped for the time being.

The Association did gratefully receive donations to assist in their operations. Town council provided annual grants, increasing the amount from $750 to $1000 in 1915, the Dominion Government gave annual grants
(with the exception of 1918 - the war years were lean), and the Rural Municipalities of Wallace and Orkney gave regular financial support as well.

World War I was raging in Europe, and its effects reached the Town of Yorkton and the Association itself. Those were the early days - before it was known as World War I, before it even came to be known as the Great War, the minutes make reference to “the present European war in defence of the British Empire”.

In December of 1916 the Board sent a letter of condolence to C.D. Livingstone on the loss of his son, also C.D., who had served as mayor of Yorkton for a year prior to quitting to join the army. C.D. the father had for several years been honoured as a patron of the Association.

1917 recorded further losses. The minutes of May 5, 1917 show condolences sent to former director, Mr. J.C. Caldwell, on the loss of a son in action, and to the family on the death of Ed Smith, who had served as director of the Association from 1910 to 1914. The very next meeting, held on the 26th of that month, records condolences to Mr. R Rousey, a former director and then a patron of the Association, on the loss of his son.

The war produced other issues for the Board. A motion of February 24, 1917 reads: “That in the opinion of this Board the Dominion Government should conscript the Labor of Canada, for Agricultural and Military purposes.” In 1918, they passed a resolution requesting the Department of Education to amend the School Act to allow boys and girls of 12 years and over to leave school to help in the farm work for the duration of the war.

The seed grain and poultry show continued and blossomed over the years. In this decade the show varied in length, sometimes one day, sometimes two, and even expanding to three in 1918. The directors were happy with the direction of the show, and with good reason.

In 1917 the directors reported that one of the judges of the seed fair and poultry show - a Mr. Seager Wheeler - had indicated that the seed fair and poultry show of 1917 was one of the best fairs he had attended in six years. Seager Wheeler has been described as the most famous farmer in the history of the Canadian Prairies. He is known as an international prizewinner in wheat competitions and the author of many publications on progressive farming techniques, making his comments the highest of compliments.

The seed fair generally concluded with a banquet, and it is interesting to note that in 1911 arrangements were made for that banquet with Mr. Harry Bronfman of the Balmoral Hotel.

While attractions and entertainment for the summer in the earliest years were arranged by sending a couple of directors on an excursion to
book the same (generally to Winnipeg), that changed before the end of this decade.

The Yorkton Exhibition Association become a member of the Western Canada Fair and Racing Circuit in 1913, and in 1917, delegates to the Western Canada Fair Association were successful in having the Yorkton Association admitted to the circuit. In 1918 Yorkton was included on the Class A circuit. By 1919 the constitution of the Western Canada Fairs Association had changed, requiring Class A fairs to have $10,000 in prizes and $10,000 in paid admission, thus moving the Yorkton fair to the Class B circuit.

Soon Yorkton would begin its own farm camps, but this decade saw the beginning of interest in these events. 1917 records the Association sending boys from Yorkton to the Farm Boys Camp at the Regina Provincial Fair for the first time, and in 1918 girls were sent to the Farm Girls Camp in Saskatoon as well.

1917 also saw the first calf feeding competition. It was open to any boy over 8 and under 17 years, who had fed, cared for and fitted his animal for at least three months prior to the opening of the fair. Two short years later, girls were allowed to enter this competition as well.

Children were a real focus for the Association in the later part of the decade. 1918 is the first year where there is mention of a School Children’s Day at the fair - which allowed children free admission to the grounds and the grand stand.

Other features associated with the fair were continued, not every year, but as best as the Association could manage. Some, but not all of these years, included a spring stallion show, a stock parade, summer fallow and standing grain competitions and plowing matches.

And there were other exhibits of note. In 1919 there was both an aviator engaged to give flights from the fairgrounds, and a moving picture exhibit offered free by the government. In the year before Yorkton’s first theatre opened, that would have been a major attraction.
1920–1929
YORKTON BEGINS ITS OWN
FARM BOYS CAMP

The long standing relationship of the Yorkton Exhibition Association with the United Commercial Travellers began in this decade. The first mention is in 1921 when $200 was granted to the Commercial Travellers at their request to defray expenses, for a Commercial Travellers Day at the fair.

1928 saw the Board strike a deal with the United Commercial Travellers. The U.C.T. would take over the outer gates of the Exhibition Grounds and receive all admittance money for the three days of the fair. In return they would pay the Association $3600, plus 50% of all tickets sold in excess of $4300, provide all ticket sellers and takers, and honour all passes issued by the Association. While the Board took pains to tell the U.C.T. that this was a one year deal only, in 1929 a similar deal was struck.

Boys and girls continued to be sent to Farm Boys and Girls Camps in Regina and Saskatoon. In 1920 any boy who wanted to be considered for the camp was required to attend a minimum of three out of a series of five lectures.

Sometimes the children who attended these camps were the offspring of directors, and other times advertisements were placed in the paper for

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applications. In 1921, Misses Daisy and Gladys Goulden attended the Farm Girls Camp in Saskatoon, and in 1922 Misses E. Harris and I. Vanderberg represented the Association.

The decision for Yorkton to begin its own Farm Boys Camp likely arose because of a report by Mr. Caldwell, who attended as supervisor in 1921 with the Yorkton boys. He reported to the Board that it was the poorest camp he had attended. The next year the Yorkton Exhibition Association hosted its first Farm Boys Camp. Eating and sleeping accommodations needed to be provided, and in the early days local farmers were looked to for assistance. In 1924 the Board agreed that the farm boys would be fed “at Bartletts on Wednesday and O’Briens on Thursday, providing the meals were satisfactory to the directors”.

Changes occurred to the seed fair and poultry show over these years. In 1920 the Association put on a seed fair, poultry show and calf feeding competition. By 1926 it was decided to replace the seed fair with a standing crop competition. And in 1929 the show expanded to include a colt show for boys and girls as well as the calf show.

In 1927 the Agriculture Section of the Board of Trade proposed a Summer Fallow competition if the Board would hold one, agreeing to furnish registered seed wheat for about 10 plots of 4 acres each, along with $25 in cash and a cup.

1927’s minutes record a matter of some intrigue. In April arrangements were made with a Mr. Fred Brown to stage a pageant for the three nights of the fair - total cost of same was to be about $1000. By June Mr. Brown had been “forced to leave town” and alternate arrangements were required for the pageant, resulting in a contract with people from Montreal for $1575.

Work on the grounds carried on. A new cattle stable was contracted at a cost of $2115, and a new shed was built on the south side of that stable. By 1925, some of the posts on the east side of the grand stand were badly rotted, and a cement wall was placed under the footings.

A road was cut through the bush near Broadway, but plans to gravel it in 1923 were put on hold. In 1929 the Board accepted the offer of Mr. H.J. Williams to construct a “first class finished road” and install three culverts along the east boundary of the grounds, north to the stables, at the price of $160.

After receiving suggestions from the Saskatoon and Regina Exhibitions regarding a proposed new exhibit building, the Board went ahead and tendered for a new exhibit building and a new dining hall. To assist in
financing, the board was authorized to issue $100 bonds with an interest rate of 7% to an amount not to exceed $6,000.

The Board, as it had in the past, allowed others the use of the fair grounds during times when there was no conflict with the Association’s. In 1920 the Baseball Club was given permission to use the grounds inside of the ring. The club wanted to fix up a diamond in front of the grand stand, and were permitted to make changes at their own expense, so long as they were satisfactory to a committee of directors and the manager.

In 1921 the fair grounds were used for a military camp, and in 1922 the Yorkton Board of Trade was allowed to hold a June picnic on the grounds.

The Board reluctantly gave the Community Sports Organization permission to use the Exhibition Grounds on July 1, 1929 for a Sports Day Celebration, but indicated that they did not wish to encourage such events as they interfere with attendance at the Saltcoats, Melville and Theodore Sports Days.

Support from the surrounding municipalities grew as time went along. The municipalities of Orkney and Wallace had given $200 and $100 respectively in 1915, $250 and $150 in 1916, but by 1920 they gave $600 and $500.

Times were tough in the early part of the decade. The minutes of 1922 and 1923 show a reduced prize list for both the seed fair and the summer fair because of poor finances. In 1923 $800 had to be borrowed from the bank to pay the accounts and prize money from the Seed Fair and Poultry Show. After the summer fair, the Association was in a deficit position and the Bank of Montreal insisted upon a guarantee. The Board felt it was unfair to have only a few directors sign the guarantee, so it was decided that all directors would sign for the debt.

Things improved as the decade progressed, and 1926 and 1927 record profits on the summer fair of approximately $2000 and $2700 respectively.

The Association continued to deal with the York Farmers Colonization Co. with respect to the debt on the land. The records don’t show how much was left owing at this time, but in 1925 a letter was received from the company offering to accept $6,000 or $7,000 to give clear title to the land. The response from the Association, according to the minutes, was to “increase our offer to $3,000”. Either the Yorkton Association were very good bargainers or York Farmers really wanted to help out, because by the end of 1926 a deal had been struck for $4000 for the Fair Grounds, which included York Farmers transferring an additional 15 acres on the East Side of the grounds. That was provided the Town of Yorkton would release the
additional acres from taxes, and the town agreed. Financing was secured through a mortgage with F.W. Bull for $3000 at 7% interest.

Admission prices were generally 50¢ for adults and 25¢ for children. Children’s day at the fair saw children either getting in free or being charged 5¢ with reduced prices on the midway. Complimentary tickets were provided to directors for themselves and their families, but who else should receive free passes was a matter of annual debate. One year proprietors of refreshment booths were given tickets for their help, not to exceed 30 tickets for any one booth. Another year exhibitors received free entry tickets, but they were marked “not good for grand stand”. 1929 is the first mention of reserved seating for the grand stand, when the price was set at 25¢ for days and 10¢ for evenings.

Annual meetings were often fairly perfunctory, but on occasion some real input was received. At the 1922 annual meeting it was suggested that the Board appoint associate directors from the surrounding district to create more interest in the fair. Discussion on the topic continued at the board level, but it wasn’t until February of 1929 that the first associate directors were appointed, representing towns and villages around the area, including the presidents of the Wynyard, Russell and Kamsack fairs.

The annual meeting of 1928 received a letter from A.R. Reusch advising that a number of shareholders had decided that it was useless to attend annual meetings because the directors were always re-elected to office. The minutes indicate that no action was taken on that issue, but the suggestion that the office of president should be held for one or two years only, appears to have been better received.

The Association continued its close working relationship with the Board of Trade, and a highlight of the decade was working together to plan a program in 1928 for the celebration of a special event in Yorkton’s history - when Yorkton attained city status.
1930–1939
THE LEAN YEARS

John E. Hartwig of Helena, Montana, who brought Yorkton its first rodeo in 1934.

The thirties were a particularly difficult time on the Prairies, and it was no exception for the Yorkton Exhibition Association and those associated with it. In 1931 the Association sent committees to see Yorkton City Council and the Council of the RM of Orkney to see if they could increase their grants to the amounts given the year before.

By September of 1931, the Association was in an overdraft position with the Canadian Bank of Commerce in the amount of $322.35, with $333.55 still outstanding in cheques for prize money from the summer fair. The bank agreed to honour those cheques, but no others. As temporary assistance, the Bank of Montreal loaned the Association $700 in order that the good name of the Association might be maintained.

In 1932 the Dominion grant had been reduced to $1500, whereas it had been $2500 fifteen years earlier. The prize monies awarded in 1933 were the lowest in the history of the Yorkton Exhibition, and Mr. W.T.
Moore was given a contract at the price of $1375 to operate the concessions and grandstand because the Board was in no position to financially stand a loss on the fair. The Association was still waiting in October of 1939 to release prize money cheques for that summer’s fair, pending the receipt of government grants or other monies.

Admission prices were set on an annual basis, but generally children were 25¢ and adults 50¢. 1932 records the first mention of a lower price for tickets purchased in advance, with three adult tickets going for $1. That year, no doubt because of the generally economic situation, each adult ticket admitted one adult and one child under twelve. A couple of fairs in this decade saw free admission to the grounds, with only a charge for the grandstand.

The United Distributors Company proposed a Wheatstake as a fundraiser for the Association in 1936. It was a great success, with $2157.22 realized as net revenue, shared between the United Distributors Company and the Association. The following year another stake was considered, but with cars, radios, washing machines and cash instead of wheat as the prizes. The Attorney General of Saskatchewan advised that he considered such to be a lottery contrary to the Criminal Code, and the idea was dropped.

Later that year the Yorkton Hockey Club proposed the sale of Booster tickets on a car, with the proceeds to be split between the two organizations. In the end, the venture lost $252.50, and the Exhibition Association agreed to cover the Hockey Clubs indebtedness in this regard, and pay them an additional $50 for their efforts. Although it was not a money maker on its face, the Board believed the draw had improved attendance at the fair on draw date. The following year, the Association arranged with a Mr. George Hamilton to distribute 20,000 books of tickets, to be sold at 25¢ each on draws for a car each day of the fair -- a Ford on Monday, a Chevrolet on Tuesday and a Plymouth on Wednesday. Mr. Hamilton received 22.5% of the total sales for his efforts.

Arrangements for the midway were generally made through the Western Canada Fairs Association. In 1930 a circuit of 12 fairs was formed as Class B1 Fairs, with a set schedule of dates for those fairs, saving the Board the trouble and waste of time of setting the dates annually. The midway booked for the B1 circuit in 1932 was cancelled because a reduction in provincial grants by the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta caused some on the circuit to back out. The Board considered cancelling Yorkton’s fair as well, but in the end decided to proceed and simply book a midway on their own.
The 1931 midway consisted of 6 rides and 10 shows, which is the first specific description in the Association’s minutes of the fair’s midway. Entertainment at the fair in 1932 included Ukrainian Dancers and a Ukrainian Choir. The 1939 fair included an act called ‘Lynch’s Death Dodgers’ as one of the attractions.

Following the 1938 fair, the Association decided to leave the B circuit of the Western Canada Fairs Association and form a circuit known as the Canadian Midwest Fairs Association. The new circuit included Yorkton, Moose Jaw, Lethbridge and Prince Albert, with each agreeing to hold a four day fair and spend $4000 for attractions. The new arrangement apparently didn’t work very well, and by the fall of 1939, the Association was requesting membership in the B circuit of the WCFA once again.

Yorkton held its first Rodeo in 1934, with John E. Hartwig of Helena, Montana being contracted for the Rodeo at the price of $2,500 plus 10% of the grandstand receipts at the three afternoon performances. The 1936 Rodeo engaged the services of Mr. Guy Weadick of High River, Alberta at a cost of $4,000. The Board was advised prior to the 1937 Rodeo that it was customary to give the winning cowboy in each event a trophy. Mr. Frank Brunner Sr, Irwin Borget of the Blackstone Hotel, R.F. Lake, Cyril Malone of Regina, and the Honourable J.G. Gardiner of Ottawa paid for watches to give to the cowboys. The Directors of the Association each contributed one dollar in order that the Association could present a watch as well.

Perhaps because of the financial situation, or perhaps because so much work had been done in previous years, very little work was done on the building and grounds during the thirties. In 1934 the Board agreed to put flooring down in the Dining Hall at a cost of no more than $650, but that was conditional on Kelly Cohon & Co. entering an agreement to lease the building for one year at the price of $360 for the purpose of holding dances therein.

The roofs of the Industrial Building, the Ladies Building and the Dining Hall (also known as ‘Danceland’) were leaking by mid-decade, so in fall of 1936 the American Oil and Paint Co. was engaged at a cost of $400 to treat the three roofs. The contract was made on the basis that the account would be carried until after the 1937 fair, but because the work was not yet complete, nor had the problems been rectified, payment had still not be made at the close of that year.

1930 was the first year in which the Yorkton Association sent a team of boys to attend the Judging Competition at Saskatoon and the Livestock Convention at Moose Jaw. The six applicants attended several lectures and
had two practical judging tests - the three with the highest standing were sent to Moose Jaw. The preparation they received was clearly first class, as the Yorkton team stood 5th in a class of 53. The remaining three boys were given lectures and lesson in grain judging and weed seed identification to prepare for the competition in Saskatoon. That team managed to place 12th in a class of 24.

In 1932 a Boys and Girls Baby Beef club was formed, with Richard Buckle serving as its first leader. 1937 saw Yorkton host its first Farm Girls Camp.

Junior directors were considered in 1932 and 1933, but 1934’s minutes record the first Board appointed junior directors -- Horses: Joe Oshmak and Dave Tulloch, Cattle: William Wilkinson and Lawrence Claughton, Sheep and Swine: Bud Norman, Norman McKinnon, Harvey Wood and William Burkell, Domestic - Hugh Patrick, Earle Park and Lindsay Capling, Industrial Building: George Brass and Jack Lehman, Grandstand: Patrick Naphin Jr. and Joe Kryski.

In 1938 the Board acceded to a request by the Canadian Legion to hold a Veterans’ Day at the Fair - members from surrounding branches were invited to stage a parade, and those who took part received free admission to the grandstand on the day of the parade.

Liability for injuries of those attending and participating in the fair became an issue in this decade, with suitable insurance eventually being obtained. Although the records don’t disclose what position was taken on the matter, in 1931 an account was received from Queen Victoria Hospital for services rendered to a rider injured during the horse races.

And at the annual meeting of 1936, a forward thinking shareholder of the Association made a motion that the next year’s meeting be provided with a statement of revenue and expenditures, instead of the usual statement of receipts and payments (which merely showed what monies had gone in and out - not the debts owed to and by the Association). The motion was defeated.
Money continued to be a major concern in the early part of the decade. In 1940 the directors discussed attempting to get government grants paid out earlier in the year, as they were embarrassed in paying out prize money from the fair so late. Because of the country’s financial situation there were no federal grants to fairs that year, causing a loss of $2,200. By late 1943, finances were so uncertain that the Board considered the possibility of not holding a summer fair for a year or two. It was noted that doing so might make the mortgage holder and debenture holders panicky.

The situation had improved by the close of 1946, when the Board held a celebration following the annual meeting to burn the mortgage. All debentures had been fully repaid at that time as well.

The Second World War had its influence as well. The last day of the 1941 Exhibition was designated a “Stop Hitler Day”, where all the men in the King’s uniform who appeared in the parade that day were admitted free to the grounds and grandstand. That same year a clown who had been engaged for the fair had to cancel his contract because of being called into active service. In 1942 the Board wrote to the Minister of Agriculture regarding apparent discrimination against agriculturalists in terms of being called to the army.

Directors and junior directors were forced to resign as they were called up for duty. Bert Hepburn, a former junior director sent a Christmas message to the Board while stationed in Italy - the Board in response sent cigarettes as a gift.
The fair carried on, in spite of the restrictions of war time. The restrictions on rubber and gasoline forced many to travel to the fair by horse and buggy. Flyers which in previous years had been used to advertise the fair by distribution on cars at picnics and the like were discontinued, as such gatherings were now few in number. The midway was smaller, and platform attractions were more difficult to obtain. The Board had to apply to the War Time Prices and Trade Board for a supply of rationed commodities. And the Association found it impossible to rent out all the space in the Industrial Building because of general economic circumstances.

In 1947 the Association designated Wednesday afternoon of the fair to welcome home returned men from the war, and to honour Riel Rebellion Veterans.

The Board very much wanted to offer horse racing each year, but it was difficult to get good horses to come in. One year there was no racing at all, another year just harness racing was offered. The rodeo, which began with such promise in the 1930s, was no longer held.

There were also concerns about the midway. A resolution was made at the annual meeting in 1940 as follows: ‘that in the opinion of this Association, money games, as at present operated by Midways playing class “B” Fairs, are a detriment to all fairs, an undesirable example to set before the public, particularly the younger generation, and are the means of taking thousands of dollars from each district, for which no benefit is received.’ The Board took the position that no contract would be signed with a midway or carnival company which included money games other than Crown & Anchor. In 1941 the Board refused a concession for a fortune teller, saying they wouldn’t consider such a request.

The 1943 midway was small, with only four rides and two shows, but it was noted by the Board that it provided ‘good, clean entertainment’. By the next year, the same midway company provided four shows and six rides, including two ferris wheels and a big new merry go round.

The Dining Hall was a source of concern through much of the decade. A Mrs. Draper ran the Dining Hall for a few years, but with limited success. In 1942 her $100 payment was refunded to her as she had suffered a loss in the operation. She was persuaded to operate the Dining Hall again in 1943 and 1944, but paid no rental charge. In 1947 the Board decided to run the Dining Hall themselves, and hired a Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin at $10 each per day, but they too didn’t see a profit. Meals were provided at 43¢ per person in the early part of the decade, but by 1949 had reached the price of 75¢ for directors and farm camp members, and 85¢ for the general public.
The Business Girls Club requested a booth in the Industrial Building in 1946 to sell glasses of cold milk, as had been previously done by the Milk for Britain Committee of the Rotary Club. Proceeds were to go to charity.

The United Commercial Travellers held their first parade associated with the fair in 1948, with the Board providing $300 to help with expenses. The parade was a success, and the following year the last day of the fair was officially designated ‘Travellers Day’.

The junior clubs - the Baby Beef and Swine Clubs continued to operate. In 1943 the Association sponsored a new junior club - the Dairy Calf Club, offering the same support as they were giving to the other two clubs. The junior clubs together began an annual dance in 1942 - the Hoof and Horn Dance. The dance was first held in the John Deere premises, but soon moved to the Dining Hall on the Exhibition Grounds. It turned a profit each year, and the 1946 minutes note a paid attendance at the dance of 566 people.

At the beginning of this decade there was no accommodation on the fair grounds for the Farm Boys and Girls. St. Joseph’s College was used for the boys, and Simpson School housed the girls. An entry fee began to be charged for the participants, sometimes $2, sometimes $1.50, but a Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture grant in 1941 allowed the charge to be reduced to 50¢ per person.

Providing information and demonstrations to local agriculturalists remained a prime focus of the Association. Farm Machinery and Farm Power demonstrations were offered, and competitions in Farm Gardens and Summerfallow were organized. In 1944 a three day course in Farm Machinery Repair was offered which saw approximately 100 students attend. Director Norm Roebuck returned from the Agricultural Societies’ Convention and Farm Week to report that Yorkton’s Agricultural Society was credited with sponsoring practically every phase of promotional work recommended by the Extension Department of the University.

The Dining Hall, which was often referred to as Danceland, was leased for a few years to the Yorkton Swimming Club at an annual rate of $350. Later in the decade the Board determined that they did not wish the building used for dances, and made a motion to that effect.

Building this decade included a dressing room for grandstand performers, a new chimney for the Dining Hall, and a new well equipped with a power pump. Repairs were made to the grandstand wiring, and a janitor’s dwelling was purchased and later insulated, with a full basement put underneath. Clearing and breaking a fire guard around the east and north sides
of the grounds continued. An H hut and the Drill Hall were purchased from the Department of Reconstruction. 100 double decker beds and two hundred mattress were purchased, along with ten single beds for use in the H hut.

1948 was the year of the disaster. A cyclone hit a week before the fair, damaging many of the buildings and the grandstand. A fire earlier in the year took the hay shed. The directors worked very hard to get the grounds back into shape so that the fair could proceed, but, if things weren’t bad enough, two days of the fair saw substantial rains.

The purchase of the Drill Hall in 1948 had required a down payment of $1,000 with $3,000 left owing at an interest rate of 4%. In 1949 the Board decided to borrow a $12,000 for improvements and to erect a permanent roof over the site of the proposed new grandstand. The Yorkton Exhibition Association which had begun the decade in such bad financial straits had been debt free briefly - but once again payment on debt would be a concern.
1950–1959
A NEW GRANDSTAND IS BUILT

The annual fair continued to be held each summer as the people in the district had come to expect. Tenders were taken early in the year for the concessions, with Emil Yaholnitsky and P.J. Lewchuk each running a concession in the early part of the decade as they had in the 1940s. By mid-decade the booths were generally let to groups and organizations, with the Lions and Rotary Clubs becoming regulars at the fair, along with the Pebble Lake Busy Bees Club.

In 1951 the Board considered charging Machinery Agents for their displays by frontage as many other fairs do, but decided against it. They did at that point insist that the Agents purchase passes for admission rather than giving them free passes as in the past.

Most years the Board decided on a fireworks display for two of the three evenings of the fair, generally expending about $500 for the show. In 1952 the Lions Club Band sponsored a Fair Queen competition, with the crowning taking place at the grandstand performance on the last night of the fair.

1952’s fair didn’t include cattle, hog and sheep exhibits as every other fair had - the congregation of Cloven Hoof Animals had been banned because of a Quarantine for Hoof and Mouth Disease.
In celebration of Saskatchewan’s jubilee in 1955, the Association brought in the Cliff Claggett Show (a western style show which had played the Calgary Stampede), with the City of Yorkton and the Yorkton Jubilee Committee chipping in the on additional costs.

The Exhibition Association ran a car raffle most years with the United Commercial Travellers, splitting the proceeds. The Board received quotes each year before deciding on the car to be purchased - in 1951 they purchased a Studebaker Standard, instructing Border Motors to order in a “flashy two-door sedan”. In 1957 the selected vehicle was a two tone Dodge Regent four door sedan with these noted extras “air conditioning, signal lights, custom radio western springs and shocks and anti-freeze” from Northern Motors. It was a good fundraiser, with the two organizations often netting about $5000 to share.

Fair attendance was good in these years - 1954 shows 20,918 paid admissions at the outer gate and 13,155 at the grandstand, in 1955 the numbers were 21,446 and 15,200 respectively, and in 1956, 22,486 and 15,229 admissions respectively.

The United Commercial Travellers continued to organize a parade. In 1950 the committee hoped to get by without the $300 grant they had been receiving from the Exhibition Association. Things didn’t go as planned, and by 1951 the Travellers were “absolutely broke” so the Board gave a retroactive grant for the previous year’s parade. In 1956 the Lion-Ls began their tradition of hosting a kiddies parade on Monday morning of the fair, with every child participating receiving a ticket to the grandstand for that afternoon and a free treat at the Lion’s Club Booth.

The 50th anniversary of the South African War was marked in 1950 by admitting the Veterans of that war free of charge. The minutes record the following South African War Veterans in this area - Fred Scott, Malcolm Clouston, George Gilbert, John Border, Finlay Morrison, Thomas Bartlett, Dave Porter and W.R. Pickering.

Farm Boys and Girls Camps continued to be held in conjunction with the summer fair. A joint party for the two camps was held most year, which sometimes included a picnic, swimming, square dancing and lunch. 1955 saw the largest Farm Girls Camp to date, with 104 girls in attendance between the ages of 14 and 18 years. The sewing project required for admission to the camp was a square dance skirt and crinoline, which the girls displayed in an afternoon fashion show open to the public. The Association worked hard to make sure the camps were successful, and was most pleased in 1957 to be advised that the Extension Department of the
University of Saskatchewan had named Yorkton’s Farm Boys Camp the best in the province put on by both the Class A and Class B Fairs.

Although the grandstand had been damaged in the cyclone of 1948 and discussions had begun immediately about a new grandstand, repairs were made to the old grandstand. The south bleacher was completely rebuilt and the grandstand was put on “first class cement footings”. Finally in 1958 a new grandstand was erected, which was officially opened on July 14 of that year.

Also in the decade the Exhibit Hall was floored with cement, most of the barns were repaired, reroofed and painted, and a Judges Stand was erected in the Show Ring. An insulated building 24 x 40 feet was built between the Dining Hall and Race Track fence for use as a Youth Training School. The caretaker’s house was enlarged and repainted. And in 1955 Jubilee Hall was constructed as a reception centre for the Jubilee celebrations, and for future use for 4H club educational displays.

A used coal and wood range was purchased from the Yorkton General Hospital in 1952 at a price of $150 and installed in the Dining Hall with the old stoves being junked. In 1954 a new power line was installed to the livestock grounds and buildings, and all the barns were rewired.

The Industrial Building was broken into in 1951, and all the lights bulbs inside were broken. Insurance was a concern throughout the years, and in 1956 the Board consolidated all its insurance policies with Yorkton Broadway Agencies, with a total insured value of $145,400.

The Jubilee celebrations at the fair recognized all persons who were residing in Yorkton and district prior to 1895 as Pioneers, and those who took up residence between 1895 and 1905 as Old Timers. The records note a specific instruction to the Association’s secretary to secure a ball point pen for the guest book.

The Board still allowed the building and grounds to be used by others from time to time. Korb Motor Limited rented Jubilee Hall in the winter of 1955-56 for new car storage at a price of $200. A Mr. Hluchaniuk rented two barns in 1955 at a cost of $150 per barn to house turkeys, and the following year entered into a ten year agreement for five barns at the total price of $1,000 per year.

The grounds were rented to the Kinsmen Club of Yorkton for $50 for a show by the Hollywood Dare Devils for a day in August of 1952, with the Club assuming responsibility for the power and other costs in connection with the show. By 1958 a group called the Canadian Auto Dare-Devils was renting the grounds for a one day show in August at a price of $250.
In 1955 the Yorkton Jubilee Committee was allowed use of the grounds for an Old Timers picnic, with the only charge being for cleaning the grounds following the picnic. The newly named Chamber of Commerce was allowed the free use of the grounds in 1958 for a three day Hist-O-Rama show in 1957 which included 17 steam engines and 15 gas engines doing plowing, competitions and a two day rodeo. And the Association allowed a CCF Rally that same year to be held on the fairgrounds and grandstand at no cost, with the organization assuming the costs of caretaking and cleaning the grounds.

The Board, as it had from the beginning, continued to be a hands on board. All directors gave a minimum of three full days of volunteer time during the Exhibition, with considerable work being done in the month leading up the the fair. Most of the planning, the arranging of judges, the setting of the prize lists and the determination of work to be done on the grounds and buildings was done by individuals on the board. The Board was headed in this decade by two men whose names are still associated with the Yorkton Exhibition - William Wilkinson who served as president from 1946 to 1953, and Norman Roebuck who took over in 1954 and finished off the decade.

Junior directors often moved up to the Board itself when openings arose, and those names are also familiar to many today. The Junior Directors in 1956 were Ross Gilbert, Ronald Harris, William Cruikshank, Thomas Wood, Lyle Just, Gerald Grunert, Glen Farrell, Doug Sherwin, Bill Gibson, Craig Burkell, Merve Kuryluk and Ken Fookes.

The times were changing, and with it the advertising for the fair. While the Board had paid the UCT in previous years to put up posters, in 1958 the Board decided to put the $125 usually allocated to the UCT to television -- if the station opened in time.
1960–1969
PLANNING BEGINS FOR A NEW CIVIC CENTRE

The practice of taking tenders for the concessions for the fair carried on throughout this decade. The Rotary Club of Yorkton was a regular at one of the three booths located behind the grandstand, with the Ukrainian Catholic Women’s League and the Westview United Church often being successful on the other two booths. The Liberal Ladies Association and the Yorkton Terrier Club each had a try at running one of these booths as well.

The barn booth was tendered as well, but went to the Tonkin Ladies Curling Club every year. The grandstand concession was generally run by the Rokeby Curling club. The Dining Hall concession went to Mrs. A. Ingham in the early part of the decade, with Knox Presbyterian Church...
winning the concession later in the decade. In 1967 the Church offered to install new propane stoves in the Dining Hall at a cost to the Exhibition Association of $200, to which the board agreed.

While the concessions, midway and grandstand were regular features of each Yorkton Summer Fair, there were some different events each year. In 1961 the Kinsmen Club was allowed to have a lamb barbecue and build a pit for fire, with the proviso that if smoke became a problem that they would either have to close up shop or change their fuel. In 1963’s fair featured McPhail Helicopter renting space at the fair, and the Yorkton-Melville Health Region being allowed to show films. A harmonica man outside the grandstand drew large crowds in 1965, and a side show in 1967 ‘the car of tomorrow’ attracted a lot of teenagers.

The Board was always seeking to improve the fair, and sent at least a couple of directors to other fairs in the province each year to see what might be done differently. While they always returned with some suggestions or ideas, the visiting directors were often pleased to report that Yorkton’s fair was much superior in many aspects.

The question of admission charges was considered on more than one occasion. There was talk at the Western Canada Fairs Association convention of fairs who had taken on a one pay gate, which helped smaller fairs who had had a poor response on grandstand attractions. In 1967 the board raised gate admission to $1 for everyone over twelve, but the following year raised the age to 16, with those between 12 and 16 years of age being charged 50¢ and children under 12 given free admission. With the higher admission price, the board determined it needed to offer a hand stamp for those who wished to leave the grounds and return the same day.

In 1969 the Associated Commercial Travellers took over the Travellers’ Day Parade from the United Commercial Travellers.

Horse racing continued and thrived through the decade. Gordon Harris and Gerald Grunert returned from a race committee meeting in Regina in 1964 to report that there was talk about holding a Quenella as well as first, place and show. It was indicated that the pari-mutuel booth would need to be enlarged. In 1965 the board received the report that betting on the races was up, but that a photo finish should be installed.

The U.C.T. continued to work with the Fair Board to operate a car raffle. The Exhibition Association’s records of 1961 show that they had cleared $31,286.67 over the past ten years on the car raffle. In 1967 the proceeds to the Exhibition Association were $4,367.05.

There is still concern in these years about the fact that the secretary manager of the Association has to haul water for the caretaker who lives
on the grounds. The Board investigates cleaning out the old well or digging a new one, but determines that an adequate water supply can’t be guaranteed. They approach the city in 1964 about putting in water from the city through a winter works program, but that doesn’t happen.

A fire in early July of 1965 destroys four of the barns on the grounds. It is determined the fire was started by three boys - aged 5, 6 and 7. The insurance company allows the Association $4,000 on each barn lost, and the board puts up temporary stabling for that year’s fair. A new steel building is erected in 1967, and insured at a value of $27,000. The directors are called in for bees to erect the stalls in the new barn, and the work is completed in time for the 1967 fair. The president of the Association, W.H. Burkell supervises the work which takes three weeks. Another director, Colin Joyce, brings his front end loader to fill a road on the grounds desperately in need of repair.

Starting in 1961, the City of Yorkton begins talk of a Civic Activities Centre. The City asks what the Exhibition Association will contribute, but their position in 1962 is that they can’t afford anything more than to contribute the land for the building and roadway. By 1965 the plans have expanded to include new curling and skating rinks and space for the Association to host short courses. The Association is eager, but the City doesn’t proceed at this time. Of course, by the time the City finally builds in the 1970s, the Exhibition Association contributes far more than the required land.

In 1963 the Board talks to Yorkton Iron Works about plans for a Main Entrance Gate, but fortunately does not proceed with the work. By 1966 the Board has word from the Department of Highways that they will be bringing Highway #10 from Melville in west of the present gate, which won’t allow traffic in from the West or out of the grounds going East. The Board agrees to move the entrance approximately 240 feet East, to line up with Dalebrooke Avenue, if the Department picks up the costs.

In 1961 the Board passes a motion that the offices of President, 1st Vice-president and 2nd Vice-president can only be occupied by a director who is, or has been, active in agriculture. The issue is raised at each subsequent meeting where the executive is elected, and in 1968, a motion is made that any director can stand for any executive office of the board. In 1962, President Wood suggests that one lady director sit on the board, but after some discussion, the decision is made that two lady directors can attend board meetings to address any problems they may have.

New junior directors in these years include Blake Harris, Ronnie Anstey, Doug Curson, Harvey Wegner, Keith Sherwin and Grant
Some annual meetings required an election of directors to be held, others had only 13 nominations for the 13 open positions (half the board is elected each year). In 1967 the annual meeting shows President W.H. Burkell implementing a novel election concept - with 14 men nominated for the 13 positions, he instructed the shareholders to vote for the one nominee they didn’t wish to see on the board.

Norm Roebuck, a former president of the Association is elected president of the Western Canada Fairs Association in 1964. Also in that year, Miss Weinmaster of the Yorkton 4-H Beef Club, coached by director Pete Petersen, wins the CJGX trophy for public speaking, and Gerald Erhardt of the same club wins the Saskatoon competition, giving him a trip to compete at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

The Farm Boys and Girls Camps were going through some changes - in 1961 a new program was implemented where each year’s boys camp had a theme. The theme in 1961 was Farm and Home Safety, with Sask Power providing a power safety demonstration. The theme in 1962 was Field Husbandry.

The secretary manager’s salary was raised to $3600 per year in 1962 and to $4200 in 1964. A gestetner and typewriter were purchased in 1963 to save on printing costs.

The seed fair is doing well at the beginning of the decade, breaking all records in 1962, but by 1967 the committee recommends discontinuing the show. The Association continues to sponsor short courses offered through the university, and sets up a continuous program of courses in 1964.

In 1969, the Board agrees to consider selling some land to A & W - if negotiations can be successfully completed.
A new secretary manager was hired by the Board in early 1970 - William Winnitowy began at the beginning of February at a monthly salary of $500. He would continue in the position until the reorganization of staffing under the Management Board of the Agriplex, which saw Don Miskiman take over the position in late 1977.

The buildings and grounds continued to be improved and repaired as necessary. In 1971 water was installed to the ladies’ and mens’ washrooms in the Industrial Building, and at the barns as well.

Finances really turned around in these few years. 1971 showed a deficit of a little over $2,000. 1972 records a profit of almost $9,000, the fairs of 1973 and 74 showed profits of about $27,000 each year, and 1976 and 77’s fairs turned profits of $39,000 and $40,000 respectively.

Land was sold to A & W in 1970, in part because of the Association’s financial state, but a request from McDonald’s for land in 1973 was turned down.
Midways continued to be contracted through the Western Canada Fair Association, with 1970’s midway including a Balloon Tent and two Girlie Shows (details unfortunately not available). A new ride called the Sky Ride, which had been greatly anticipated, was not available as it had been damaged at the Weyburn fair. By the close of 1977, the Board had given notice to the W.C.F.A. that they would leave the association after the 1978 season, and begin contracting for midways on their own.

The first beer garden was held in 1972, with beer being sold between the hours of 2 and 7 pm for 40¢ a bottle. A request from Crown Amusements in 1972 to operate a casino was turned down, as the Board was not interested in such things.

The A.C.T. continued to host the Travellers Day Parade, with the 1970 parade including 50 units. The annual grant to the A.C.T. from the Association was increased from $300 to $400 in 1971. Entertainment in these years included the Rhythm Pals in 1976 at a cost of $7500 for three shows, and Susan Jacks in 1974 as a joint venture with CJGX. Susan Jacks was very popular, with the committee reporting more people coming in through the fence than through the gates.

After many years without a rodeo, in 1972 the Board took a chance on Brown West Rodeo Co, signing on for a three day Rodeo and two days of Chuckwagons at a cost of $12,000. Yorkton’s Mayor, Allan Bailey, presided at the official opening, which was followed by the crowning of the Rodeo Queen. Admission was $2 for reserved seating and $1.50 for rush seats, but the following year admissions were raised by 50¢.

The Farm Boys and Girls camps started the decade as popular as ever, but by 1976 the numbers had dropped to 39 girls and 33 boys, from highs of approximately 100 for each camp. In 1977, the Board decided to discontinue the camps and look into other activities for youth.

The Board of the Exhibition Association was a supporter of many community endeavors. The Board offered to make property available for both the new Western Development Museum and the Kinsmen Arena - although neither of these facilities actually built on the Fair Grounds, the offer is a sign of the Board’s desire to assist in any way possible.

The biggest focus of the early 1970s was the proposed building project, which had been kicked around since 1961. The plans for what was called a Civic Activities Centre in the 1960s evolved into discussion of a Multi Purpose Complex by the 1970s.

The Exhibition Board was required to take a major role for this project to proceed. Not only were they prepared to provided the land for the facility, there were government loans for buildings of this nature which could
only be accessed by them. The City of Yorkton very much needed the Exhibition Association if plans for the new facility were to come to fruition.

In 1971 the Board instigated further discussion with the City of Yorkton on this matter, and by May of 1972, the Exhibition’s president, Gerald Grunert, was reporting back to the Exhibition Board that the building and development committee was in the process of selecting a firm to prepared the Master Plan and Conceptual Design. The cost was to be approximately $4,800 and the City was only prepared to pay half. The Curling Club had promised to contribute $500, the R.M. of Wallace had offered $300. So the Exhibition Association proceeded to hire Keith Consulting of Regina to prepare the plans, knowing that the balance of the bill would be theirs.

Keith Consulting presented their proposal in September of 1971, with two possible sites for construction - at the north end of the grounds, or west of the grandstand. The minutes of the directors’ meeting of September 19 show “the City is awaiting our next move and that it is up to us to decide if we should proceed with the building”. The initial decision on whether the City of Yorkton would build an Agriplex belonged to the Yorkton Exhibition Association.

Mayor Bailey appeared at the Association’s annual meeting to explain that the project would need the approval of the Local Government Board and the taxpayers of Yorkton, and the cost would likely be between $800,000 and $1 million dollars. A resolution was thereupon passed by the shareholders, authorizing the directors of the Exhibition Board to borrow up to $1 million dollars for the purpose of constructing a complex on the fair grounds, with authority to mortgage the property.

In early 1974, G. Grunert, L. Muir, G. Erhardt and J. Caudle were named as committee members of the Yorkton Exhibition Association to deal with the issue of the proposed complex. As costs were rising, the approved amount for the directors to borrow was increased to $2 million. The committee recommended to the Board that the Exhibition Association proceed with construction of the complex, and apply for federal government loans for the building, on conditions which included the Exhibition Association being allowed free use of the facilities for all their normal operations for a period of 99 years.

Progress on the complex was slow, and in April of 1975 the Board was finally presented a draft agreement with the City of Yorkton. There is immediate concern on the part of the directors with respect to the difference in representation by the Exhibition Association and the City of Yorkton.
on the Management Board of the facility, which gives effective control of
decision making to the city.

At the Association’s annual meeting at the end of 1975, President
Gerald Grunert reports that the complex project is at a standstill. The share-
holders suggest that the Board consider the possibility of starting the project
on a limited scale on its own. A motion is made for the Board to investi-
gate construction of a building for curling facilities and the needs of the
Yorkton Exhibition Association.

The minutes of February of 1976 record a final agreement has been
reached with the City on the complex, which will be presented to the Local
Government Board for approval, and then to the taxpayers of Yorkton by
way of a bylaw vote. In April of that year the Board actually signs the agree-
ment with the City, and by June of that year the Management Board has
taken over operations - receiving all rental income and paying operating
expenses.

Work on the complex begins March 1, 1977 with a completion date
of late October of the same year. At the same time, the Exhibition Association
begins work on the Agripavilion, at a cost of approximately $170,000. The
Board has $110,000 in the bank to put toward the project, and the rest is
financed through the Management Board. The Association is doing well
financially at this time, and manages a payment of $25,000 to the City in
August of that year, and another of $15,000 in December. Construction goes
quickly, with the official opening of the Agripavilion coinciding with the
Livestock Donors Sale held July 20, 1977.

The official opening of the complex, a joint venture of the City of
Yorkton and the Yorkton Exhibition Association, happens right on sched-
ule - October 28 and 29 of 1977. The name of the building, the Parkland
Agriplex, was the result of a naming contest instituted by the Management
Board. As that body had budgeted only $500 for the contest, and allocated
it all to advertising, the Exhibition Board once again stepped up to the plate
and provided $150 for prizes.
1987–1995
TRAGEDY AT THE FAIR

The summer fair of 1988 will be remembered by many in Yorkton and area for the tragic accident which occurred on opening day. A vehicle was driven through the fence and onto the fair grounds, killing the driver and injuring several others. The Association’s minutes note that “the quick response of the Midway, Ambulance and City Fire Department personnel likely prevented further injury”. The Directors of the Association had discussed the need to plan for emergencies just the previous year and had sent a letter to the City of Yorkton regarding the need for another gate. The extra gate would be of value in a variety of emergency situations, but would have been of little assistance in the tragedy which occurred.

The seniors’ tea saw changes in this period – in 1988 it moved from being held before the fair to the first day of the fair, and became a ‘self serve’ style of tea. The new format was considered a success, with 566 registered seniors, and approximately 40 more who didn’t sign the register. Seniors were given a reduced gate admission price that day of $3.
It was also a time of change in the Yorkton Exhibition Association’s office. The manager, **Dodie Litowitz** resigned in 1989, finishing work just after the summer fair, and **Shaun Morin** was hired as her replacement. Shaun resigned in 1995, and **Richard Okrainec** was hired to fill the position, after a competition which saw 38 applicants for the job.

The Exhibition’s casino also went through some changes in these years. In 1987 it was moved into the Convention Centre. It was a good fundraiser for the Association, with $76,000 bet over the four days of the fair in 1989, with a profit of $14,000 realized on the casino and breakers. In 1991 the Association netted $17,000 on the casino and $12,000 on breakers.

Now that the organization had purchased the equipment necessary to run a casino, there were others who wished to use it. The equipment was sometimes rented out, and in 1991 the Exhibition Association was approached by the Melville Agri-Park Spring Show to run a casino during their four day show. The Melville offer included a guarantee to cover any potential losses up to $2500, and to split any profits which might be realized on a 50-50 basis. It was a success, and the Association was invited back to run a casino at the Melville show the following year.

In 1992 the Board discussed running a permanent casino monthly on a year round basis, as the government was looking into running casinos like bingo, and it was felt the Exhibition should establish something permanent before that happened. A motion was made to run a permanent casino on a trial basis in the Agri-Pavilion, subject to approval from the Saskatchewan Gaming Commission. It was a short run, as the monthly casinos were dropped in March of 1993.

Horse racing was cut back to two days in 1988, which was reported to cut down on the usual losses – only $4500 was lost that year. 1989 was a great year for horse racing – the most successful ever – with a profit of between three and four thousand dollars. Corporate sponsorships totaling $4,200 certainly made a difference.

1989 was a significant year in the Association’s history, as in July of that year, the Board approved a proposal for a fall commercial cattle sale to be held October 18-21 of that year – Harvest Livestock Showdown. In the early years of the event there was no gate admission, but admission was charged to the rodeo and rodeo dance. The show was ever expanding, and in 1992 the Board made the decision to heat the Industrial Building to solve the problem of lack of space.

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Exhibition Association ran a fashion show at Harvest Showdown for a couple of years, but in 1992 the Optimist
Club took over the fashion show. In 1994 a gate admission was charged of $3 for adults, $2 for students and $1 for children, but a ticket to the rodeo or fashion show would get you through the door as well. In 1995 the event hosted a Canadian Wheat Board symposium with two pro Wheat Board representatives, and two supporters of dual marketing, which was very well received.

Entertainment at the summer fair often included Saskatchewan Express. In 1991 Lyle Walsh reported to the Board that GX Radio’s Star Search had been well attended, but that he was uncertain as to whether the station would have another one the next year. His hesitation turned out to be misplaced, with the Star Search finals becoming an annual, and very popular, entertainment piece at the fair.

In 1989 Sask Sport brought in a 5,000 square foot display to the fair at no cost, the only provision being that the Exhibition Association needed to provide manpower to man the display.

In 1991, the regular concessionaires expressed concern about the treatment received by health inspectors of the provincial government. The Board did their best to follow up on the concerns by asking for a meeting with the Health Department, but by the time a meeting was held in 1992 the department reported no major concerns, with the exception of a request that the Association paint the inside of the four permanent booths.

In 1995 beach volleyball was introduced at the summer fair. Jim Logan of Yorkton Concrete dug the pits and the sand was donated by Parker Quine.

It was tradition in these years to name an Honourary President for the summer fair, and those given the honour in these years include Jesse Savisky, Gerald Grunert and Craig Burkell. The Travellers’ Parade was now a joint project of the Exhibition Association and the Yorkton Kinsmen Club, with the 1991 committee comprised of Stan Stephenson and Irwin Kohlert from the Exhibition, and Gerry Jemieff, Barry Boehm and Bob Anderson representing the Kinsmen Club.

In 1991 the Board came up with the a new idea for the car draw – each paid admission would get a ticket, with a draw made nightly. They asked the five local car dealers to take part at a cost of $500 each, which would include them in the advertising and allow them to display a vehicle on the grounds during the fair. The lucky ticket holder would be allowed to choose one of five keys, and then select a car to try to start. If the key worked, that vehicle was won. The Yorkton dealers all refused, but the car draw went ahead with dealers from the surrounding area – Cardeager Ford, Todd Plymouth Chrysler, Ochs Chev Olds and Paragon Sales.
New ideas for fundraising were always being considered, as costs of putting on the summer fair and other events continued to rise, as well as there always being repairs and improvements to be made to the grounds. In 1992 a financial blow was received in a letter from Darryl Cunningham on behalf of the provincial government, indicating that as all government grants had been cut, the Association would not be receiving the anticipated $7,500.

The Yorkton Exhibition Association was presented with the ‘Industry Achievement Award’ for 1988 at the annual Canadian Association of Exhibitions convention the following year. Those who served as president in these years are all well known names in the Yorkton community – **Gordon Harris, Dave Farrell, Don Harris and Doug Poier**.

While the Exhibition Association rarely makes donations to other organizations, feeling the need to concentrate on their own mandate, there have always been a few exceptions. In 1988 the Board donated $2152.70 to the Intensive Care Unit at the Yorkton Union Hospital, and in 1991 gave $2,000.00 towards the University of Saskatchewan’s Agriculture Building.
Unlike the sometimes lengthy terms of president in the earlier years of the Association, a standard term of two years as president has become the norm. These years saw Doug Poier, Bill Wright, Lyle Walsh, Brian Berrns, Shaun Morin and Dave Nussbaumer serve in the position.

Lyle Just retired from the board of directors in 2003 - after 48 years of service. That same year a decision was made to reduce the size of the board from 25 to 20 directors.

Honorary presidents continued to be named, and it became practice to name a different individual each year. Those honoured in these years were: Gerald Grunert, Helen Norman, Gord Harris, Ruth Shaw, Bill Bucsis, Ross Gilbert, Rudy Els, Don Harris, Stan Stephenson and George Nussbaumer.

Fundraising has always been a concern for the Association, and in 1997 the Board decided to try a cash lottery, with grand prize of $100,000, along with some lesser prizes. The tickets are $100, and the Association offers the Band Boosters an opportunity to make some money as well, by allowing them to sell tickets at a commission of $10 per ticket. This first try goes well, and a profit is shown of just over $38,000.
The next year the Board decided to try a home lottery, which was also successful - a net profit of about $80,000. By 2001, the revenue on the home lottery has dropped to under $24,000, and in 2003 the decision is made to go with a Christmas Cash Lottery instead. That lottery suffered a loss, making the Board decide to leave the lottery concept alone for the present.

Harvest Showdown has become a huge event for the Association. Sponsorship support is very high for the event, and profits are generally good. In 1999 Urban County Dodge signed on as a new sponsor for the Showdown Rodeo, and in 2003 Morris Industries committed to three years of a possible ten year agreement to become the show sponsor - with the event now known as Morris Harvest Showdown.

In 1997 the Yorkton Exhibition was honoured with the award as Canada’s Regional Fair of the Year.

In 2002, a request was made by the Century of Care Committee, a group organized to celebrate health care in the region, to use their logo in the Exhibition’s promotional materials. The board had some concerns about whether this would diminish the impact of use of their sponsors’ logos, but in the end decided to use the Century of Care logo on their summer fair promotional material.

This year, 2005, the Board has agreed to call the parade the Yorkton Exhibition Centennial Parade, in recognition of the province’s centennial.

The Farm and Leisure Show, which had been hosted by the Exhibition Association with the Sunrise Lions Club and the Yorkton Chamber of Commerce for a number of years also saw some changes. In 2000 the four day show was reduced to three days, and in 2001 the show’s name was changed to Spring Expo. In October of 2002, the Exhibition was notified by the Chamber of Commerce that it did not wish to participate in Spring Expo anymore. A meeting was called with what was now the Yorkton Lions Club to discuss the options. A decision was made to carry on with some changes - a free gate, an increase to display costs to recoup lost revenue from gate admissions, and the youth events would be dropped.

A five year proposal put forward by the Exhibition Association in 1996 to become partners with the Sno Riders for their annual show in October was accepted. The agreement called for a varying percentage split with the group for the first four years, with a flat fee to the Sno Riders in year five. The Exhibition’s expectations about possible profits from the show are not met, and in the final year the Exhibition Association shows a loss on the event due to the promised payment to the Sno Riders. In 2001, the Board votes to discontinue the partnership on Winter Wonderland.
A potential $15,000 grant for Pari-mutuel Horse Racing in 2000 convinces the Board to apply to host pari-mutuel racing. The grant is received, and two days of racing is held during the summer fair. In 2002 the Board considers putting on an additional ten days of racing, but doesn’t receive the hoped for additional grant, and drops the plan. In 2004 the Association hosts four days of pari-mutuel racing.

The manager’s position has seen a lot of change in recent years. These years started with Richard Okrainec as manager, who was followed by Cathy Dlugan, Susan Buckle and then Don Kunkel have acted as joint manager of the Agriplex and the Exhibition Association.

In 2002 a group of six was inducted into the Association’s senate: George Nussbaumer, Merv Kuryluk, Don Miskiman, Bill Wright, Stan Stephenson and Dave Farrell.

Through these recent years, the Yorkton Exhibition Association saw further changes with respect to their relationship with the City of Yorkton. The agreement entered in 1976, which transferred all the land owned by the Exhibition to the City was revisited. That agreement was entered at the conclusion of their joint project to build the Parkland Agriplex.

In mid 2000, the Board received a proposal to establish a new entity, the Parkland Agriplex Inc., which would get title to the properties, and employ a general manager for the operation of both the physical facilities and the programs and activities of the Exhibition Association. One of the instigating factors of this proposal was that both the Agriplex and the Exhibition had found themselves without a general manager. The original proposal indicated that the Exhibition would maintain their existing priority status for use of the facility for their events for 21 days per year at no cost to the Exhibition. It also indicated that representation on the board of this new entity would be equal for the city and the Exhibition.

By the time the proposal is fleshed out later that year, the board of the new Parkland Agriplex Inc. is to have nine directors - five from the City of Yorkton and four from the Exhibition. The two groups are, however, to have equal say in determining employment, dismissal, job specifications and compensation of employees.

In November of 2000, the Association’s executive recommends this agreement to the Board, and the motion in favour of proceeding with the agreement is passed on a 10 to 8 vote.

Details of the precise agreement to be signed are slow in being settled, and it is not until March 27, 2002 that the Board of the Exhibition Association votes on a final agreement, with City Council approving the agreement in early April. The vote of the Association Board at this time is

The Yorkton Exhibition Association History
unanimous. The new agreement terminates the 1976 agreement, and the
two parties agree to jointly operate the Parkland Agriplex for 99 years or
for so long as the Exhibition Association continues to operate, whichever
comes first. This agreement, unlike the last, gives the Exhibition Association
a say in the management of the facilities.

The Exhibition Association is allowed, as before, 21 days use per year
of the Parkland Agriplex excluding the swimming pool facility, free of
charge.

The new agreement comes up for discussion again the following
year, when in February, Mayor Phil DeVos attends a meeting of the
Exhibition Association executive, and indicates that he feels the amalga-
mation is not working. He suggests the the Agriplex and the Exhibition both
go back to individual management, and proposes giving back to the
Exhibition Association the land, excluding the parcel the Agriplex sits on,
and allowing the Exhibition Association to continue its free 21 day use of
the Agriplex, including the new facility which is to be built.

While Mayor DeVos appeared on his own behalf in February, in
March the entire City Council met with the Board’s executive to discuss
essentially this same proposal. They indicate that the majority, although not
all of council, favours the proposal, but the board of the Exhibition
Association votes not to pursue this proposal.

In 2003 the Board agrees, as is necessary under the terms of this agree-
ment, with the Parkland Agriplex Management Board to sell a parcel of
land the the Tribal Council Education Centre and direct the proceeds to the
Agriplex expansion project.
The Yorkton Agricultural Society, which evolved into the Yorkton Agricultural and Exhibition Association, began with the settlement of Yorkton. In the beginning its purpose, like the settlement of Yorkton, was entirely agricultural.

But as the settlement became a town and then a city, Yorkton expanded and diversified. And so did the Exhibition Association. It has never abandoned its agricultural roots, but it has grown to encompass so much more. Its place in the community has been firmly established by its involvement in the significant events of the region, such as being asked to work with the local Board of Trade to plan the celebration in honour of Yorkton attaining city status.

That first fair held in 1884 would have borne no resemblance to today’s fair. Held in early October, the first fair was comprised entirely of exhibits of cattle, oxen, hogs, horses and some women’s work. It quickly expanded to include ducks, geese, turkeys, chickens, sheep as well as grains, roots and vegetables. Soon platform attractions and a midway would
be added to round out the experience for fairgoers. The 1901 fair included side shows and a merry-go-round - the beginning of the kinds of attractions that have become the norm at the Yorkton fair.

The Association purchased its first property in 1896, and sold it in 1901 to purchase larger grounds. For some time thereafter, the fair was held on the property now known as Jubilee Park. In the early years the fair was combined with a sports day, with football, baseball and foot races being included. In 1912, that property was sold and the Association purchased the property where the fair is still held today.

The railway was a significant part of life in the early years. The settlement of Yorkton was moved in 1891 to be nearer the CPR tracks which had just been completed. Special trains were arranged for exhibitors and those attending the fair to bring them in from places such as Winnipeg, Melville and Wynyard. The fair was a significant community event, with the first fair being described as Yorkton’s first social event.

In 1909 the property, assets and liabilities of the Yorkton Agricultural Association were transferred to an incorporated company - the Yorkton Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition Association Limited.

Through much of the Association’s history, arrangements for the midway were made through the Western Canada Fairs Association, with Yorkton joining the circuit in 1917. In 1930 a circuit of 12 fairs was formed as Class B1 Fairs, with a set schedule of dates, making the scheduling of the fair more regular. The Yorkton Exhibition Association has played a leadership role in the Western Canada Fairs Association since its earliest days, and several of Yorkton’s directors have served on that organization’s executive.

Events hosted by the Exhibition Association have come and gone over the years. In the early years, the seed grain fair was a big event for the Association, was dropped in the 1920s, but is once again an annual event. Horse racing in various forms, has been a regular although not consistent part of the fair, with pari-mutuel racing being a recent offering. In recent times, the Exhibition Association has been a big part of two major events in the city of Yorkton - Farm and Leisure which began in the 1970s and was later renamed Spring Expo, and Harvest Showdown which began in the 1980s.

Yorkton held its first rodeo in 1934, contracting a rodeo out of Helena, Montana. Rodeos were held annually until the mid 1940s, but then didn’t resume until the late 1970s. The first indoor rodeo was held in 1981, and while there have been rodeos most years since then, it has not been an annual event.
The Commercial Travellers have had a long association with the summer fair. Their involvement included running the gates for the summer fair for the Exhibition Association in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The first United Commercial Travellers Parade was held in 1948, with annual parades being held by the UCT with financial assistance from the Exhibition Association until it was later taken over by the Associated Commercial Travellers.

Many exhibitions held farm camps in association with their fairs, and in 1917 and 1918 respectively, Yorkton sent its first boys and girls to camps in Regina and Saskatoon. 1917 was also the first calf feeding competition hosted in Yorkton for boys, and by 1919 girls were included as well. The supervisor sent with the boys in 1921 reported that the camp they attended had been unsatisfactory, so in 1922 Yorkton hosted its first Farm Boys Camp. The first Farm Girls Camp was hosted in the city in 1937, and Yorkton carried on with the camps until the 1960s.

The Exhibition Association is responsible for sponsoring the Baby Beef Club, the Swine Club and the Dairy Calf Club. These junior 4H clubs have seen many young people develop talents and interest in agricultural pursuits. Together these clubs began an event in 1942, held annually for many years thereafter, that has been more recently revived - the Hoof and Horn Dance.

The Exhibition Association has seen national recognition for the quality of its undertakings. Yorkton’s fair was named the “Best Fair in Canada with attendance under 50,000” at the Canadian Association of Exhibitions Convention in 1978. The Association was also presented with the “Industry Achievement Award” for 1988 at the Canadian Association of Exhibition Association convention.

The money that the Exhibition Association has expended on the buildings and grounds over its 122 years of existence has been huge. The grandstand, the Industrial Building, the Exhibit Building the Agri-Pavilion, all the barns, the concession stands - all of these things and more were financed by the Association. Wiring, water lines, gravelling, pavement - the work to improve the grounds has also been an ongoing event. These facilities have not only served the Exhibition Association in hosting their annual events, but have also been a great asset for a variety of community organizations who have made use of them over the years.

The biggest building project in which the Exhibition Association was involved was the Parkland Agriplex. Without the Association accessing government loans available only to them, the project would never have come to fruition. And without the Exhibition Association providing the land
on which to build the Agriplex, it would not be a part of the complex of facilities on the Exhibition grounds.

The agreement reached between the City of Yorkton and the Yorkton Exhibition Association in the 1970s, under which the Exhibition Association gave all of its land to the City, has been modified more than once. As times have changed, the arrangement between the parties has changed as well. But there is no doubt that the City of Yorkton has benefitted greatly by the contributions of the Exhibition Association.

Finances have been difficult for the Association many times through its history. On several occasions, including in the fairly recent past, the directors of the Association have signed personal guarantees to ensure that the work of the Exhibition Association could continue. Few organizations can claim that kind of loyalty from its leadership.

The organization has continued through a variety of bad times, both their own and national. They have managed to hold an annual fair each and every year since the first in 1884 - through two world wars and the depression. The midways may have been small in some of those years, and the attractions reduced, but while other exhibition associations decided there was no alternative but to abandon their fair for a year or two, Yorkton carried on.

They have also carried on through hardships of their own - fires, a cyclone which caused enormous damage to the grandstand and many of the buildings, and the tragedy of 1988 which saw several fairgoers injured and the driver killed of a vehicle driven through the fence onto the grounds.

Through it all, the shareholders, and particularly the directors of this organization, have given their all to hosting a variety of events for the residents of this region. The Yorkton Exhibition Association has been a part of the community since Yorkton’s very beginning, and continues today in its mission to promote the agricultural industry, to educate and inform, to offer a wide range of entertainment packages, to provide a venue for business and industry to present their products and services, to benefit the economy of the region, and to build a sense of community.

Yorkton Exhibition Association history compiled by Donna Bucsis
The association continues to stay solid with its events under the leadership of presidents Sheldon Nicholson, Penny Sandercock and Grant Neil. The shared manager situation did not work well and Shaun Morin returned as YEA manager in October 2007.

The Parkland Agriplex went through major additions and expansion in 2004 and 2005 by the City. The facility was renamed the Gallagher Centre with the arena now being known as Farrell Arena and Convention Centre naming rights are Wellington West.

In 2008 the YEA built a new Pari-mutual Building which includes a concession and bathrooms on the south side of the grandstand. Harness racing increased to 16 days of live racing each year and the upkeep of the barns, grounds and grandstand falls on the shoulders of the YEA as the Gallagher Centre takes all the budgeted funds for upkeep and repairs on the exhibition grounds.

During this period the YEA become more active adding a number of new events to its calendar.

CPCA Chuck wagon Races are added in 2009 on the second weekend in June. Bad weather hampers the success of the event each year and its future is in jeopardy for 2013.

The Tractor Pulls are revived in 2011 and are a huge success. Scheduled on the 3rd week of August they draw huge crowds and the future looks very good for their continued success.

The Painted Hand Casino contracts the YEA to produce a CCA outdoor Rough Stock rodeo in 2011. The 2 day event is scheduled for mid-week on the second week of August. The crowds are good and the event adds another fundraiser for the YEA.

During this expansion era for the YEA they receive a number of awards including CPCA “Committee of the Year”, Saskatchewan Horse Federation “Merit Award for the protection of the Horse Industry” and Yorkton Chamber of Commerce “Community Merit Award”.

With the expansion of the events more staff is hired to bring the full time staff numbers to 5 and event part-time staff to 10. The number of volunteers required to help at the expanded event list is covered by partnering with various community groups looking to fund raise. These include the Yorkton Terriers, Yorkton Lions Club, Yorkton Figure Skating
Club, Old Relics and JJ’s Hockey Teams, regional 4H clubs, Sacred Heart High School, Harvest Hockey Team, Chamber of Commerce, Robotics Club and Archery Club to name a few.

In 2012 the board started a reviews it’s governance and operational policies. It is decided to reduce the number of elected directors from the 25 down to 15 over the next 5 years.

The YEA continues to be a leader in the community and the largest presenter of events. It is estimated that over 200,000 people attend one of the YEA projects each year.