

SOUTHERN, JOE.

COUNTRY FAIRS.

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Joe Southern,
Investigator,
October 15, 1937.

Brief write-up on the old time
COUNTRY FAIRS.

A brief write-up on Agricultural Fairs held in Atoka County from 1887 to statehood 1908. This is written from my personal knowledge as a citizen of Atoka and also Atoka County from September 8, 1887, when I, Joe Southern, moved here and located and have lived here ever since. In 1889 a committee of the following named citizens of Atoka and Atoka County organized for the purpose of holding county fairs and for the purpose of encouraging the farmers and stockmen of this and surrounding counties to raise better crops and livestock. The names of the men on the committee were:

John M. Hodges, Indian; Charles LeFlore, Indian; Leon Harkins, Indian; Joe Ward, Indian; Judge J.C. Fulson, Indian; Dr. E. N. Wright, Indian; W. H. Harrison, Indian; Reverend J. S. Murrow, white man; W. A. McBride, white man; G. A. Cobb, white man; B. F. Smiser, white man, and D. N. Robb, white man; Bill Dunn, white man, and others.

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After the first fair was held it was such a big success that it was decided to hold yearly fairs which were the beginning of the up building and development of Atoka and the surrounding counties and the lease system. These fairs encouraged farmers and stockmen from other states to move in and lease and clear farm land and build homes, and were the cause of small inland towns and post offices and settlements being set up and caused the extension and expansion of these different enterprizes and industries and caused better farming, and more seeds and the sales thereof. These fairs also caused more ranching and better breeds of livestock and poultry and better markets for them, better homes and churches of different denominations, and schools and the Murrow Indian Orphan Academy was established at Atoka.

The building of an extension of the railroad, the sawmill and timber, lumber industry, the prospecting and mining business, better dirt roads, and building of some sawmills and gristmills industries, better buildings and there was a brick yard established in Atoka.

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These men and fairs were very successful in encouraging different business men to move and locate at Atoka and in Atoka County, and in establishing such industries as an ice plant and in the manufacturing of ice, putting in a telephone system and electric light plant and water plant and sewer system.