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ON VINITA'S FIRST FAIR

It was about 1888 that the farmers and the business men of Vinita began to talk about organizing and starting a fair to exhibit the farmers' products, F. G. Cowan, one of Vinita's early day merchants, said. A tract of ground was secured out of the Frisco track, near the present site of the S. S. Cobb homestead. George Dotty and I, as we were both living out near there, volunteered to build the first race track, Mr. Cowan said. That was northeast about a quarter mile from where the present site of the fair ground now stands.

A Board of directors was formed, and as near as I can remember it was composed of Hooley Bell, L.L. Crutchfield, S. S. Cobb and Warden Trott, of Vinita, and V. Gray and W. R. Lindsey, of Choteau.

Here the field worker had a hard time in finding out who was the president of Vinita's first fair. He asked practically every old timer he could think of, and

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none of them could remember any of the officers, but Hooley Bell, and they all seemed to think he was the mainstay but he turned out to be the secretary, who did all the paying of premiums, and the race horse men.

Finally I met Johnnie Parks, then a mere boy, but who was one of the jockeys at Vinita's first fair. He said, "I don't just remember who was the president, but I do remember Dora Little and a girl from Texas getting in a squabble about who would ride Dink Douthett's fine saddle horse, in the ladies' saddle horse show. They couldn't agree, so they called in the officials, and Lee Crutchfield said, "well, I am half the fair," and Hooley Bell said, "well, I am the rest of it, so we will just let the Vinita girl ride him." By that we figured that Lee Crutchfield was the president of Vinita's first fair and Hooley Bell was its first secretary.

BUILDS GRAND STAND AND OTHER  
BUILDINGS

F. G. Cowan says, the fair directors went right ahead and put up a grand stand, an agricultural building, built stock pens, and everything that it took to make a real fair, and that is just what they had for many years. Bill Shelton was in charge of the Agricultural exhibits, and it took about as many assistants to handle the exhibits as it did ten years later. I never saw such corn and pumpkins in my life, as were brought to that fair. Mrs. Kate Carselowey brought a pumpkin to that fair that was as big as a small barrel. It weighed 100 pounds, and easily won the blue ribbon, over a large number of others that were brought.

Mrs. Rebecca L. S. Main was the first secretary of the Art exhibit, and she held the position as long as the fair lasted.

LIVE STOCK EXHIBITS  
By Johnie Larks

Johnie Larks, a life time resident of Anita, can remember some of the first men who brought live stock

exhibits to Vinita's first fairs. He said Ike McDonald, who lived on Cabin Creek five miles west of Bluejacket, was the champion hog raiser. He brought the big bone black Poland China hogs to the fair that weighed 300 and 300 pounds, and always won the blue ribbon on them. In later years he took them to Muskogee, and Oklahoma City and won first premiums on them there. He sold them to all parts of the Indian Territory and shipped many to other states.

Billie McDonald, out on Little Cabin, east of Vinita, had the Swan Furman strain of cattle, that were always prize winners. Jim and Abe Hanson, from Shawnee creek, east of Todd Switch, always brought stock, but I don't remember what breed it was. John Franklin, from Starr Stella, was the champion white faced cattle raiser, and is still raising this strain for breeding purposes. Frank Franklin, east of Vinita, was the champion Percheron horse raiser.

Moving on down the line a few years, Dan Warren moved to the Territory from the state of **Maine**. He came

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here with a herd of fine horses and Jacks, and created competition in the horse and Jack line that the boys here had not known. He won most all the money for a few years, until some of the old timers begin to beat him with his own breed of stock, which they had bred up.

#### LADIES RIDING CONTEST

A Ladies' riding contest was a feature of the first Vinita fairs. The old side-saddle was still in use those days, and there were many fine lady riders. Dora (Little) Gabbert and Miss Ella Charlesworth won most of the money. Miss Charlesworth came here from St. Charles, Mo., to attend the fairs, and was the first real competition Miss Tittle had had. I have already related the squabble that Miss Tittle had with a Texas girl, about who was to ride Dink Dputle t's champion saddle horse. The horse was a stallion and a race horse, but was trained to ride in the fancy saddle horse shows also.

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WILD PIGEON SHOOTING  
By Chief Buffington, Vinita.

Thomas L. Buffington, last living chief of the  
Cherokees, said Bob Barrett and he took two wagons  
and drove to Goingsnake District, where he knew of  
a wild pigeon roost, as he was raised down there.  
They brought back two wagon loads of wild pigeons,  
that were used for a shooting match, at Vinita's  
first fair.

We had a lot of fun with them, but hardly any  
of the home boys could hit them. There were a lot of  
~~crack-~~ sportsmen from St. Louis and Kansas City  
that shot like they had been raised in a pigeon roost,  
and who won most of the money in this contest. Arch  
Goodykoentz, a Vinita merchant, was about the only one  
that could shoot with them. Among the home boys who  
were in the contest were Bob Barrett, Dr. Oliver Bagby,  
Arch Goodykoentz, Sam Widenhour, myself and others  
whom I cannot remember. Sonny Knight and a lot of the  
other small boys about town got most of the pigeons.  
They were any body's pigeons after they left the ground,  
and they would go out about dark and kill them.

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FACTS

By Johnie Parks, Vinita, Okla.

Johnie Parks says he was born in Vinita in 1878. His father's name was John T. Parks. He was city marshal of Vinita, when Vinita held its first fair, and he owned two race horses. He helped build the first fair, and owned stock in it. John Parks is carrying his father's stock till the present time. His father had been riding the horses, and he grew up with the Vinita fair, and made most of the other fairs in the country. He rode in the first and in the 1st fair that was held in Chelsea, Oklahoma.

COL. JIM WALKERSON STARTED  
FIRST RACES

Col. Jim Walkerson, who died in Muskogee a few years ago started the first races held in Vinita's first fair. He was at nearly all the early fairs held in Vinita. I think they sent and got him, possibly from Fort Smith at first, but in later years he moved to Vinita and served as United State deputy marshal. Several years later, Ben Hester, of Chelsea, started the races at



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Vinita. He also served in that capacity as long as Chelsea's fair held up. They tried Jim Skinner, of Adair for one day, but he couldn't seem to get us started off, so they got Ben Hester.

#### HORSES AND STABLES

Dave Dotty, one of the men who helped build the first race track in Vinita had charge of the stables. He had a roust-about by the name of Dock Bridgeman, who always carried a hatchet, and thereby gained the name of "Old Hatchet" He used the hatchet to run the curious fellows away from the stables. We had lots of stable room, and every stall was filled for the first fair, so they had to keep building more stalls each year. We had race horses there from almost every state in the union.

#### SOME RACE HORSE MEN I REMEMBER

I don't pretend to know nearly all the race horse men who attended Vinita's first fairs, for they were many, but some I do remember are: Ed Shield, Western

May County, Oklahoma; Charley Barnard, May County;  
John Randolph, Canada, who had "grey Lobby and Lofton  
Outwood"; John Adair, Muskogee; Joe Adair, Muskogee;  
Johnnie Singleton, Snow Creek, near Coffeyville,  
Kansas. John Farks, of Vinita, had two horses, one of  
which he had covered with a sheet and the horse rolled  
over against a fire and was burned up; Dave Dotty,  
Vinita; Frank and Scott Audrain, Fairland; Bill Angel,  
Ogechee; Bill Howell, Osceoma; Louis Moore, Bernice;  
Red Collins and Dick Kilgore, Vinita.

Dick Kilgore owned a fine stallion by the name of  
"Dick Bassett." The horse was a prize winner, but Kilgore  
did not know it. He was afraid of him and never did get  
him to do very much around Vinita. Johnnie Randolph, one  
of the race riders here at the Vinita fair, knew the horse's  
value and bought him from Kilgore. He took the horse to  
Canada and raced him and did so well, that he shipped him  
to England, where he beat everything over there in his  
class; Duke Kelly and five sons, of Weston; Cyrus C.

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Cornatzer; Cal Coker, Alluwee; Bible Bros., Chelsea;  
Jim Wagoner, Wagoner; Lenora Lovalace, California;  
Jim Morris; Drake Bishop; A fellow they called Rackensack.;  
the latter two were from Kansas City. They had two  
horses, Harry R. and Henry L. They won two straight  
days with them; Senator Bill Davis, Letchum, who  
started his boy, Johnie riding races so young, that  
he had to strap him on the horse to keep him from falling  
off; John E. Duncan and Bill Skelton, had a mare, by  
the name of "Irish Girl." She was balky and was hard to  
get to leave the stake. Duncan took her to Tahlequah with  
him, and from there to Rose Prairie, where he bred her to  
fine saddle horse and raised some fine saddle horses. She  
had a big white spot on her side, and was the prettiest  
animal I ever saw.

#### SOME EARLY DAY RACE RIDERS

Johnie Davis, the boy who started riding so young,  
that he had to be strapped on, was one who hardly ever  
lost a race. Johnie always got off in the lead; other

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riders were Johnie Singleton; Greenup Singleton;  
George Dotty, all of Vinita; Tony Mitchell, Muskogee;  
Johnie Dunbar, Vinita; "Cannon Ball, a colored boy, from  
California, who rode for Red Collins and Bill Davis;  
Ed Dotty, Vinita; Billie Moore, Horse Creek; Charley  
Alexander, Centralia; and Jessie Lovlace, Santiago, California.