

250th Hardwick Fair Celebration 2012

The Beginning – Brigadier General Timothy Ruggles

We owe our beginning to Brigadier General Timothy Ruggles an early settler to Hardwicke and a prominent loyalist to the King. He was Hardwick's representative to the General Court in Boston from 1754 to 1770. As speaker of the House in 1762, with Hardwicke being very prosperous, Timothy Ruggles used his position to promote a formal act of the court, establishing the first Fair to be held in his home town of Hardwick, to be known as the Hardwicke Fair. This was the equivalent of having the King grant his favor in England.

The enabling act for the fair was passed on June 12, 1762. The Boston Evening Post of Monday, June 21, 1762 printed this on its front page: *"The following Acts were passed the Great and General Court of Assembly of this Province the last Session, Viz." "An Act for setting up a fair in the Town of Hardwicke in the County of Worcester."*

"Be it enacted by the Governor, Council, and House of Representatives, that henceforth, there may be kept a Fair in said Hardwicke on the third Wednesday and Thursday of May, and on the third Wednesday and Thursday of October annually. "

"And be it further enacted, that the said Town of Hardwicke be and hereby are enabled, at a meeting called for that purpose, to choose proper officers to regulate said Fair, until the annual meeting in March next, and to be chosen thereafter annually, in the month of March, during the continuance of this act."

"And be it further enacted, that no bargain and sale, made at any of the said Fairs, shall be deemed valid and effectual in the law, unless the same be made between sun-raising and sun-setting."

"This act to continue and be in force for the space of seven years from the first day of July next, and no longer."

It was then determined *"That the fair be held in the middle of the town."* Right here where we are standing. Voters at a town meeting in Hardwicke, then chose their first fair officers, who are our this years dedicatees.

Superintendent of fair market: Mr. James Aikens."

Constables: Thomas Robinson and Deacon John Cooper, shortly replaced by Jonathan Farr.

Location advisors: Capt. Ruggles, Elisha Hodge, Stephen Fay, Nathaniel Whitcomb and John Bradish

Publicity: Capt. Paul Mandell

The Hardwick Fair could be taught as a history lesson of the people of Hardwick, that mirrors the history of our country.

The Beginning – Brigadier General Timothy Ruggles

1762 As speaker of the House in 1762, Timothy Ruggles used his position to promote a formal act of the court, establishing the first Hardwicke Fair, the equivalent of having the king grant his favor in England.

This was more like an open-air market, with area farmers displaying their goods for sale to the public. Large group dinners were a thread throughout the entire life of the Hardwick Fair.

1762-1774 Every year elections of Hardwick Fair officers were chosen at the annual town meeting in Hardwick.

James Aikens, Nathaniel Whitcomb, Edward Ruggles, and Paul Mandell are buried in the Old Cemetery.

Revolutionary War

1775 Hardwick town's people supported the Revolution. The morning after and "the shot heard around the world" in Lexington/Concord in 1775, by midnight word had spread to Hardwick and before sunrise 75 "minute-men" with shouldered "firelocks" headed to Cambridge to battle the British.

1775 the town voted to discontinue the public fair in the town and choose a committee to notify people through the newspapers. Timothy Ruggles being a loyalist, siding with the King, was exiled from Hardwick, and moved to Canada. The fair being Timothy Ruggles' idea and survived through his connections with the government prior to the revolution, after his exile, lapsed for a generation.

The 50 years leading up to the Civil War

1828, nearly 50 years later, brought back the fair. By then the memory of Timothy Ruggles political alignment to the king could be forgotten. What towns people recognized was the beautiful gift he had given the town, that being the site of the first official Community Fair in the US.

Science was emerging and a forum for promoting new technology in agriculture gave fairs a new purpose. Farmers no longer needed locations to sell their wares; it became a social gathering, taking on a new roll of exhibitions and competitions. Displays in the exhibit halls then, would mirror what we see today. The new focus was on animals, with up to 200 Oxen showing up each year, right here on the common. With over 100 exhibits of fruits, vegetables, cheese, butter, along with handwork by the ladies, the Hardwick Fair was a high quality event, well attended by towns' people and others alike.

1837 Commissioner - Massachusetts passed a resolve providing for an agricultural survey of the state. The governor authorized the appointed of a “suitable and competent person” whose duty it was to make the survey, collect accurate information and make a detailed report. The Rev. Henry Colman of Deerfield was appointed as the Commissioner of the Agricultural Survey and made reports to the state until the ace was repealed in 1841.

1839 the Barre Gazette and Massachusetts Spy both had a notice about the Hardwick Fair. According to the show secretary, Joseph Whipple, the Honorable Henry Colman, “State Commissioner of Agriculture,” was expected to be present.

1858 mechanical farm equipment was becoming lighter; oxen teams were in decline and horses were taking over. The traditional aspects of the cattle show were changing with the shift from oxen to showing dairy cattle.

1861 Now the tension between the North and South was escalating to the civil war, which stopped the Hardwick Fair continuity. Again, it took another generation to reinstate this great tradition.

1900 through 1929, gap till 1947

With this 30-year period of no Hardwick Fair, agricultural organizations became popular with the Grange being most prominent.

1905 a successful Hardwick Fair was reinstated. Exhibits grew, with an expanded cattle show and now prize money was being awarded.

1906 received a donation for the prize money fund from a past resident of Hardwick Calvin Paige.

1907 saw the outside of the town hall decorated with an evening display of Japanese Lanterns to light the areas outside for evening events.

1908 had a budget for \$100 in premiums.

1910 Calvin Page, born in Hardwick in 1827, a graduate from New Salem Academy, moved to California during the Gold Rush in 1850, setting up a dry goods stores there. Becoming very wealthy as a result, Calvin Paige moved back east to NY City, yet he never forgot his roots. Being a supporter of the Hardwick Fair, passing away in 1909, Calvin Paige willed the town \$100,000. This was to support agriculture in the town, which included the Hardwick Fair.

The town voted to accept the conditions of the will and in 1911 purchased the land that now is where our cattle show is. The Calvin Paige Agricultural Fund was established and by 1914 was a Hardwick Fair partner with the Hardwick Grange leading.

Around WWI the fair was not consistent.

Shortly after establishing the Hardwick Farmers Co-op and started the close relationship with the Hardwick Fair. The manager of the Calvin Page Agricultural Fund and/or the manager of the Hardwick Farmers Co-op were often the president of the Hardwick Fair.

1930 – 1946 brought the financial crash and later WWII, which not fair was held.

1947 Brought back the fair, which has been held every year since.

1954 first year for Friday night and Saturday Hardwick Fair

1955 Chicken Barbeque

1957 Conversation about establishing a permanent Hardwick Fair Association.

1962 200 celebration it was voted to have the fair August 17,18, three weeks earlier, the rule now is the third Friday and Saturday of August is the official date.

Friday night super was started.

1965 Horse Show

1966 battle of bands, auction moved to 3:30

1969 Fire Department took over Chicken Barbeque

1974 Fair institutes official opening Friday

1975 Chain Saw completion

1977 Frog jumping, tennis tournament

1978 5.7-mile road race

1979 Horse shoe pitching

1980 literary competition

1984 T-Shirt booth, Randy Noble cutting Stone Soup Concrete

1990 Blacksmith booth, Romanoski scholarship, state stops paying premiums

1992 Scarecrows inside, next year moved to cemetery.

1996 Computers to tally awards

1997 Town hall under restoration, show moved to tent outside, Grandpa's Kettle Korn

1998 Cattle tent, Lego's

2002 Massachusetts cuts all funding for premiums

2005 Pancake breakfast

2006 Antique tractors and parade