

# HISTORY OF THE WAPELLO COUNTY REGIONAL FAIR

The first fair was held in Wapello County in 1868. The exact location is unknown. In the following years, annual meetings were held at various sites within the county. In 1890, THE BIG 4 FAIR ASSOCIATION was organized, a fairground site acquired, located in Eldon, close to the intersection of the counties of Jefferson, Van Buren, Davis and Wapello.

THE BIG 4 FAIR ASSOCIATION operated with annual exhibitions from 1890 through 1917 when it was not held because of US involvement in World War I. During this period of time, the fairgrounds served as a place of encampment for organization of Company C of the SIGNAL CORPS, U.S. Army. Also during this time many of the walnut trees on the fairgrounds were cut down and the lumber used for gun stocks in support of the war effort.

In 1921 following World War I, The WAPELLO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL FAIR ASSOCIATION was organized and purchased the assets of the BIG 4 FAIR ASSOCIATION. The first fair held as the Wapello County Agricultural Fair Assn. was in 1922 and has been an annual event each year except for 1942, 1943 and 1944 when the fair was not held in support of the World War II effort.

The fairgrounds today is located at the original site of the BIG 4 FAIR in 1890 along the north bank of the Des Moines River. In 1986, the fair adopted the regional concept and has been offering competitive exhibits to the region as well as the county.

There is one original building left on the fairgrounds – The Art Hall – which was later renamed Hollenbeck Hall. The building is located at the South end of the Grandstand. The brick building has four sides with four doors. Each side represents a county - represented when the BIG 4 FAIR ASSOCIATION was established.

The Wapello County Regional Fair is held each year in June. We have become known for our country concerts such as Alan Jackson, Barbara Mandrell, Conway Twitty, Loretta Lynn, Oak Ridge Boys, Charley Pride to name a few.