

SKIT - 140 years for Brigden Fair-----1990

Introduction by Queenie

Solo: Laurie Sahw - Hi Ho Come to the Fair"

SKIP

Part 1 Back drop mural of 1850 - 1913 Ryle's Tavern etc.

Enter Ina carrying candle to set on the table. Verne follows.

Ina: Oh, my but I'm tired. That was quite a trip home. The roads were so ruddy with the rain we've been having lately. It sure shakesone up. But it was a great fair day.

Verne: Well, the horses are all bedded down. It seems such a long trek home. Much better when held at Riley's Tavern. It is so much closer.

Ina: Of course, but think of all those times people coming from the east have to travel over those roads. My goodness at this time of year it would be dark when they would get home.

Verne: Well, I hear rumours of the fair being settled in Brigden where it is more central - just rumours but it could be a better location. More people would feel like entering the competition if it were in Brigden. It is pretty one-sided when held in Courtright and Mooretown or Corunna, even tho it is just every other year or turn about.

Ina: That might be a good idea to go to Brigden on a perrmanent basis ---get away from Riley's Tavern too!

Verne: Now, now, you always felt some folks could be too easily influenced. Well, I don't know about that ---anyway what will be , will be I always say.

Ina: Seriously tho, do you think moving it to brigden would be better for the fair?

Verne: Of course I do. More people would really get involved. Directors would eventually be spread out coming from the north, east and west and south. Oh, definitely it would helo to strengthen the fair. You know you have to build on a good strong foundation to become strong and to grow. The fair needs lots of dedicated people and there does seem to be enthusiasr out there. Yes, I'm sure the fair could put down roots if it were located in one place and brigden is the most centrally located.

Ina: Look at the ladies' Department tho'. How could that be improved - crocks and crocks of pickles, crocks of butter, bread, home-made soap so beautifully white and of course many other things such as the good maple syrup. We have so many lovely quilts and hand knit sweaters too. I just can't imagine a bigger display.

Verne: Well, I feel that way about the livestock. We are getting bigger classes and certainly more breeds than 20 years ago. Prize money came to over \$1000 the fair paid last year and this year it will be more.

Ina: This is 1889 and I heard that some Brigden men had bought 15 acres on the Brigden sideroad and that they were going to rent it to the Moore Agricultural Society.

Verne: Did you now! Well, I did too so perhaps it is all settled that the fair will be held next year on the property in Brigden. It can't be just a rumour surely.

ENTER the Quartette

Verne: Where have you fellows been?

Quartette: To the fair of course! Sing - "Oh what can the matter be----"

All Exit.

SKIT - 140 years of Brigden Fair

PART 2 Back-drop changes. Time 1913-1950. New location with high board fence.

Oil lamp carried in by Lula or Dorothy and set on the table. They are reminiscing of the era.

Solo: Laurie sings "Oh what a beautiful morning, oh what a beautiful day."

Lula: Isn't it great that those men purchased the property when the opportunity to buy came up? Now the Moore Agricultural Society has bought it from them and it has become a permanent home for Brigden Fair.

Dorothy: I guess it cost \$2900 or so which seemed like an enormous amount of money then but it included the high board fence to which the animals are tied out of the wind on Fair Day.

Lula: That old red building has been a great thing for the ladies' exhibits. Whatever did we do before. Now the meals are also served by the churches in the lean too building at the back. It just had a mud floor and those catering had to bring stove, cooking utensils, just about everything they needed to work with. Whatever did we do before? *Meals were served in the BALMORAL HOTEL up town.*

Dorothy: Well, that really was the turning point in 1913 when it was noted that it was the most satisfactory year in the history of the society, which meant something when we consider the fair had been going for more than 3 score years then.

Lula: Yes, in this year of 1949, as we look back, it really was the greatest and best move forward for the fair then called Moore Fair to come to Brigden permanently.

Dorothy: They have been going ahead ~~at~~ charging 25¢ at the gate and I can't see why they had to raise it to 35¢. Some folks won't like it I'm afraid.

Lula: O well, you can't please all of the people all of the time. I think tho' when in 1928 they made the motion that the prize list be open to the world that it made a difference. The results seem phenomenal with that advertising and soon it was rated "Best One Day Fair in Ontario."

Dorothy: When I see the many breeds of Beef, Dairy, Sheep, Swine I'm astounded and the beautiful horses some people have.

Lula: O, yes, Boys and Girls Clubs with Achievement Day in Brigden. The Kiwanis Club of Sarnia, took over sponsoring the Dairy Club along with Brigden of course and the Department of Agriculture. Other classes grew rapidly too as each year the fair exhibits got more and more .

Dorothy: I was surprised at how the Ladies' Dept. has grown since the turn of the century. There were 2 lady directors then and now we have 24. Quality is emphasized and exhibits must be new and up-to-date. The Ontario Agricultural Society holds a Convention every year and of course Brigden sends delegates who come back with some new ideas. Mr. Doolan was the first delegate sent to O.A.A.S. Convention and that was in 1926.

Lula: I was reading a little history book on the fair and do you know the Secretary who has so much work to do, received \$50 a year in 1913 and now in 1949 gets \$300?

Dorothy: Quite a difference isn't it? Do you know it will be 100 years next year 1950 and we are having a new Exhibition building built and it will be 50' x 120'. The Moore Agricultural Society can get a \$1000 grant for building or erecting a flag staff etc. They are going to build a stone pylon out in front and put a bronze plaque on it with the history of the Fair.

Lula: It is quite a Society when you think of all the work that is done and accomplished by volunteers. It is quite a fair with 10,000 or 12,000 people attending each year, rain or shine. Rain quite often it seems but people come anyway.

Dorothy: Our facilities are improving but those out-houses are the most upsetting things. Cement blocks for walls are O.K. but no roof to keep out the rain. There is no privacy and who-ever designed those things was no architect. One long seat, open air, square instead of round holes! 'nough said!

Lula: O well, some day it will be better.

Exit with lamp.

Alicea Wilson sings

Anniversary SKIT 140 years Brigden Fair

Part 3 Back-drop changes and buildings added as skit progresses.  
Notice time-----1950 - 1990

Enter Graydon, Currie and Maxine carrying electric light, sits  
\*\*\*\*\*it on the table\*\*\*\*\*

Maxine: I'm exhausted (drops into rocking chair) That was quite a day.

Graydon: Reliving 140 years is really exhausting when you think of what has happened from that tiny beginning of fair at Riley's Tavern up until to-day.

Currie: 140 years is a mighty long time, but you are right - no one could have predicted the changes and the growth of Brigden Fair.

Graydon: The Quansit Bldg just erected in 1950 and the Pylon with the bronze plaque and stone work really makes quite an impression on the grounds. That is also the year we became a Class B Fair. That seemed to be the turning point. Everyone worked so hard to meet the requirements of \$3000 Prize money to be paid out in 3 consecutive years and we failed and failed again all because of rain. It took 6 years to reach this status and it was very exciting that year. It also opened the door to greater opportunities.

Currie: How could that be?

Graydon: The grant system of both Governments became available.

Currie: Oh, Yes, of course that was 40 years ago and for a moment I forgot. That was when we were eligible for \$100,000 grant with 50% from the Federal and 25% from the Provincial when and if we could raise the money and build a barn or barns. That was so much money everybody scoffed at the idea of the M.A.S. borrowing \$100,000.

Graydon: O, a few didn't and the Board were convinced when 5 Directors put themselves on the line. My Dad told my brother he would lose his farm doing it.

Gurrie: Well it worked for after the first building it came easier and in 4 years, 2 cattle barns, 2 horse barns, the sheep and

PART 3

swine plus the poultry building were all built and paid for.

Maxine: You know the ladies were drifting along doing what came along to do until they felt they had to get organized. This they did in 1958. They elected Ina McKellar as President who took on the responsibilities. We took on the painting up and beautifying of the buildings and grounds, trying to create a good image for the fair. The pylon gave us a clue for a logo and the crest was made up for our jackets which we wore to Convention as well as to the Fair.

Currie: I guess the men picked up on the tidying up and soon the grass was so well taken care of some remarked, when they came to the fair, that the grounds looked manicured. There were no weeds hanging under the iron fence and the buildings.

Maxine: We were always getting into debt but our needs were great. We needed a building up front for the ladies work etc. and so the Administration Bldg. was built in 1959 but there was no Federal Grant for that. Everyone dug in tho' and when it was paid for in 1961, the L shaped addition for a kitchen was added. New washrooms were also erected and a Mother's change room right next to the Administration Bldg.

Currie: The Jr. Bldg. came next

Graydon: In 1967 it was Canada's Centennial and a grant was offered by the Government for an iron Gateway which we applied for. It completed the Entrance to the grounds on the Brigden Sideroad.

Solo: Shelley White (1990 Queen of the Fair) sang the Centennial Song of 1967.

Currie: What year did we become eligible for Class A status?

Graydon: That was in 1973.

Currie: Well the fair was growing and we needed more parking land. When we had the opportunity in 1974 it seemed right to buy 17 acres which gave us somewhere near 40 acres total.

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Graydon: IN 1979 the new Exhibition Hall was to be erected and the only place suitable was up front next to the Quansit bldg. The Pylon cement work had crumbled till restoring it was too costly and so they took the bronze plaque to the office and installed it on the front of the Administration Bldg. where it is displayed for all to see. The Exhibition Bldg cost \$115,000 with just a 25% grant assistance from the Provincial Gov. and so it looked almost unsurmountable with 20% interest rate at the time. However, diligent volunteer workers including the ladies wherever possible - they did it!

Maxine: Yes I feel the ladies did their part painting and working. A Wintario helped furnish equipment for the kitchen, the tables and chairs for the hall so that banquets could be catered t. Banquets, we are still catering right up to the present 1990. At that time a plaque was presented by Amy Dawson and her family in memory of late husband Eldridge Poland and as a memorial and record of the Past Presidents.

Graydon: Also another Wintario grant in the "Year of the Handicapped" helped us install new washrooms for the handicapped and side-walks and showers for the midway people who stay 4 days now.

Currie: That is quite a chair you are sitting in Maxine?

Maxine: Yes, it was a gift to Mr. James Skeoch way back in the early years of the fair. He was one of the gentlemen who bought property around the area of the Bank of Nova Scotia and where the first fairs in Brigden were held - around the turn of the century. He was a faithful to Brigden Fair and as he attended 64 continuous years, rain or shine he was presented with this chair. Many years later his daughter gave it back to the Fair. She died in 1981 and also left us a legacy of \$1000. We landscaped the front out here with this money.

Currie: The Iron Sculpture in our y ard out front, "Early in the Morning, Down on the Farm," created much interest by the public in 1984. When we planned to purchase it, donations came from

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a great many people and was assisted by a Wintario Grant called "Art in Public Places".

Maxine: Another building was built about that time too I believe.

Currie: Yes, we never get thru building it seems. Another building was needed, and Coliseum /83 was built. Again it was a scramble to get it finished for the fair that year. Lots of problems arose - where to build it, water holes to skirt, water lines and hydro to mention a few. I worked on it and Graydon knows all about it for he was chief of the Agri-Urban crew who built it.

Graydon: Coliseum /83 was built with a Livestock Ring. If there were any opposed they quickly changed, for that year it rained and the Coliseum had 5 shows going on at one time. If anyone doubted its need they were quickly convinced otherwise; as it rained the show went right on unhindered.

Maxine: 1985 was a terrific year when we took on all that debt buying the Taylor property. 40 acres at a cost of \$140,000 and added to that the existing debt still owing made it \$164,000. They continue to work, those diligent ladies of the kitchen, catering to banquets and assisting the Board to pay off the debt. A number of women are now directors and take their expertise in management to assist in decision making. Lorene Sharp became the 1st lady as Brigden Fair President in 1985.

Currie: Not only buying that land but building that roadway off Hwy 80 was a big job. We worked for days to have it ready for the fair.

Graydon: It was a worry for years with the crowds at Fair time. There were bottle-neck entrances and bottle-neck exits. It seemed the only way to go when the land came up for sale. It would perhaps be the only opportunity to get an Entrance off Hwy 80.

Maxine: And now we have the new Gates. In 1989 the gates were made possible by the legacy left by Bill Moore to the Moore Agricultural Society. In May the gates were dedicated and



SKIT part 3 cont'd

and trees planted along the highway as a tribute to Wm. Moore and all faithful volunteers throughout the years. The cost was \$34,000 and the remainder of the legacy was put on the work of the Grandstand - total spent \$40,000.

Quartet: Headed up by Bruce McCallum and consisting of Bob Marsh, Bill Miller, Peter Hayward who sang Tipperary with words by Bruce.

Queenie : That sounded great. There have been many things left unsaid as it is impossible to list everything. If some should have and have not been included, it was done inadvertantly and apologies are in order. If you would like to compare with 140 years ago some of the statistics are:

Gate receipts 1989	\$69,000
Prize money paid	\$46,000
Judges paid	\$3,642
Memberships are	\$3.00
Entry Fees	\$4.00
Total Assets Dec. 31	\$824,750.27
Total Liabilities "	\$11,000 which includes \$1000 of the mortgage which was paid off in 1990.

Estimated attendance between 50 and 60,000.

Names of our great ones who have contributed so much cannot be listed but we do have some plaques and records to remember them by. The plaque for the Ladies Presidents and all future Presidents was presented by Lorne Munday in memory of his wife Reta.

We keep track of our Queens which we have had continuously since 1972 We have their pictures and a plaque from North Gate Plaza. We have given one and sometimes two Service Awards each year since before 1941 for their contribution to Agriculture and this year Alvin was nominated for the Service Award by the M.A.S. for volunteer work supplied by the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture. In 1984 Queenie McBean received the Bi-centennial Certificate of Merit by the Government for service to Agriculture and related Industries during Bi-Centennial year, when Secretary-Treasurer of the Fair.

Part 3 cont'd

To conclude a mural was built depicting the growth of Brigden Fair and relating it to the growth of a tree. Since this year is designated the Year of the Trees and since we are planting at least 140, this seemed a suitable symbol to use.

Brigden Fair is depicted as a tender young sapling in 1850, and like any growing thing, it had to be nourished, pruned carefully, and shaped occasionally with roots securely and firmly rooted in good soil.

Brigden Fair, or Moore Fair as it was first named, was growing under the direction of the faithful directors of those years. They realized this little sappling had to become permanently established - it had to have a place for the roots to grow in all directions and so just like sunshine or light which is required for all growing things the directors needed to come from all directions, north, south, east as well as west, to add strength to the organization.

The roots of the tree were kept intact as the fair took up residence in Brigden, the heart of Moore Township. It has flourished over the years with the dedicated volunteers all up through the 140 years and thus it has produced much fruit to-day.

The heavy horses of many breeds, the light horse classes, 6 breeds of beef cattle, 3 breeds of dairy, many breeds of sheep and goats, the poultry and rabbits etc. to complete the livestock. The Exhibition Hall of Home Crafts, 4H and Jr. Activities, Fruits and Vegetables. Yes the babies each year for the Baby Show Competition.

We have had a 1 day fair, then a 3 day fair and now a 4 day fair. It has been a glorious 140 years. We are proud of our heritage given to us by the many volunteers of the past and present and so we are celebrating and honouring each and everyone from 1850 to 1990 on this May 6th 1990.

May we pass along the torch for the future directors and volunteers to cherish the past, and build on this strong foundation, a Brigden Fair for to-morrow. Some things in the past sounded risky but the Fair came through, no doubt by the sound judgment of those in charge. This is Canada where we are free to do our thing.

SKIT - 140th Anniversary of Brigden Fair

SKIT part 3 cont'd

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The Quartet - Bruce, Bob, Bill and Peter, with Laurie, Shelley and Alicea accompanied by Marilyn Shaw at the piano concluded the program with "They all call it Canada",

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Bob McGee, chairman of the 140th Anniversary with committee, Lorene Sharp, Amy Dawson and Queenie McBean have been responsible for the successful event May 6, 1990.

A smorgasbord Buffet was held, catered by our own Fair Board Catering Committee, followed by a Fashion Show of By-gone Days which was arranged by Lorene Sharp and assisted by Joyce Sharp and Jean Munday. Much credit goes to Amy Dawson, talented lady of "Many Ideas" who created the historical skit with assistance from Queenie McBean and the cast who took the parts. Many thanks to the male quartet for their musical numbers and to the girls for their lovely solos and Marilyn Shaw for her assistance at the piano.

The trees will be planted in May. The location to be in the south-east corner of the new property. The trees have been selected and are a collection of native growing species.