



*Just some of the Vintage Steam Tractors and other interesting equipment you will see on the fair grounds*



*Tractor Pull Exhibition*

# THE FARMERSVILLE STEAM FAIR EXHIBITION

By Sally Smid

It is not surprising that Athens has always had a real interest in vintage farming equipment. After all, until 1890, Athens was called Farmersville as a result of the many area farms. In the early 1970's some of the Athens Lions Club members began exhibiting their personal steam equipment and attended various steam fairs. Most of the steam tractors in the early days were used to run the large "thrashing machines" which separated the kernels from stocks of grain crops, much like combines do today. Those Lion members got the idea of organizing an annual fair in Athens. Merrickville Fair organizers provided advice. Lions Robert Hartley, Gordon Mack, John Dancy, and Bob Croxall, along with Rupe Green, whose steam engine is used each year to roast Corn Fest cobs, as well as others, worked together to launch the first Farmersville Steam Fair in 1980. It has become an annual event for the past 36 years. George Tackaberry and Sons Construction Company have always been generous in supporting and contributing to the success of the annual Exhibition, which takes place at Centennial Park in Athens. It is interesting to note that Athens' first mayor, Watson Parish, donated that land to the village in the early 1900's. He was a historian of sorts himself and would be pleased to

have seen this land being used for such a purpose. The first fairs were much smaller and mainly included a display of operating vintage machinery. Maxine Mack organized the craft show. There has always been a beer tent. Later it also included a parade on Sunday afternoon.

Over the years the Fair has grown and has become much more complex. Displays also include antique cars, trucks and motorcycles. There are now several tractor and horse competitions, an assortment of refreshments, and children's amusements, as well as country music. Today the exhibition has grown into an event that has drawn more than 3,000 attendees in past years. Many exhibitors continue to return each year from near and far. Kathryn Hudson organizes the vendors inside the arena. The new washroom building has been a real improvement. The Steam Fair has become a place to visit with old friends and to meet new ones. About 100 exhibitors can camp on the grounds and many do, adding to the festive spirit and camaraderie.

Preparations for the 37th Annual Farmersville Exhibition have been underway for months. The 2016 Fair at the Centre '76 fairgrounds, in Athens Ontario will run from the evening

of Friday, July 15th, when the Old Time Fiddlers perform, until late Sunday, July 17th afternoon. The feature tractor this year is Allis Chalmers, as well as the usual lines of vintage tractors, trucks and much more will be displayed. Tackaberry's legendary collection of antique trucks and other machinery, also known as Tack's Toys, is always very unique and popular with visitors. If this year is typical of others, there will be steamy summer temperatures as well. Tickets for the Exhibition are \$15 for adults for a weekend pass and \$10 for the day. Children under 12 are free. For more details visit the website @ <http://athenslions.org/steamfair/>

To really appreciate this event, it is important to stop and visit, especially with old time exhibitors. They are very excited and dedicated to their hobby and are always willing and eager to talk about their vintage equipment. It is becoming more obvious however, that many exhibitors are aging and some can no longer attend, but the interest in agriculture and vintage equipment continues, and it is hoped that the appeal will carry on into future generations. It is also hoped that this part of the local heritage will be celebrated in Athens for many years to come. **LH**