



Voyageur Canoe Rides during Turkey Fair (picture credit Jack Harvey)

LYNDHURST TURKEY FAIR

Resurrected From a Flourishing Past

By Tanya Hammond

Today we know it as Lyndhurst Turkey Fair, “a free day of fun for everyone”, held the third Saturday of September each year. September 17th 2016 will mark the 23rd annual Turkey Fair since it was brought back to life by the local Chamber of Commerce and a dedicated group of determined volunteers in 1994.

The popular Fall fair has an endless list of things to offer, with many displays that pay homage to Lyndhurst’s history, including a quilt show, antique car and boat show, heritage exhibits, turkey calling contest, horse drawn wagon rides and a chance to

ride in voyageur canoes. Terri Wood, a local realtor and a devoted Chamber of Commerce member, who has been involved with the modern day Turkey Fair since the inception says, “If you haven’t been – you are definitely missing out!”

Widely known for its giant craft fair that fills the streets with vendors selling their wares, the fair regularly draws a crowd of over 5,000 visitors every year. Live music provided on outdoor stages adds to the excitement that day, along with other activities to keep the young and the young at heart happy, including a petting zoo, pony rides and

small carnival games. The silent auction and popular button prize draws are made possible by donations from the local businesses and others who share in the desire to see the Turkey Fair continue to be a success.

It is that same community spirit and support that made it possible for the village to not only resurrect an event that had been held over a century earlier, but to also save what is without a doubt the most striking feature in Lyndhurst. The old three-arched stone bridge, built in 1856 and 57. It is said to be the oldest bridge still in use in Ontario. Visitors to the Turkey Fair will undoubtedly pass over the famous bridge, either by car or by foot, and will even have a unique opportunity to learn to row an antique St. Lawrence River Skiff, that will be accessible at the docks at the base of the bridge that day.

Though this celebratory day came back to life as a reminder of days gone by, it is important to note that the original Lyndhurst Turkey Fair in the 1880’s was born out of necessity. A plague of grasshoppers hit the Leeds County region back then. How might that strange fact be related to the need for a Turkey Fair? Interestingly, it is reported that as a result of the invasion of grasshoppers there began a mass breeding of turkeys to help eliminate the nuisance grasshoppers. Consequently, large flocks of turkeys were slaughtered later that December when the cold weather made it possible for them to be transported safely. This overabundance of turkeys prompted the local farmers to hold a Poultry Fair to sell their birds. The fair was an astounding success with turkeys being shipped via the Lyndhurst Train station to as far away as Montreal and Toronto. By 1926 Lyndhurst Turkey Fair “had the reputation of having the largest poultry fair in this district”, according to an ad in the Athens Reporter.

In fact, 55 tons of poultry was sold for \$52,000, proving the ever growing popularity of poultry. Unfortunately, with the access to refrigerated trucks around 1933, the original Lyndhurst Turkey Fair met its demise. However, we can be thankful that a group of inspired individuals saw the opportunity to once again feature the feathered fowl at a huge fall festival and watch people flock to our small village as our forefathers did. **LH**

Lyndhurst Fair circa 1915
Courtesy of the Merton Moorehead Collection



To learn more about this year’s Turkey Fair on September 17th, contact: Martha Harvey @ 613-928-2989 or go to www.turkeyfair.ca or www.facebook.com/turkeyfair