

The World's Fair at Birdseye Center

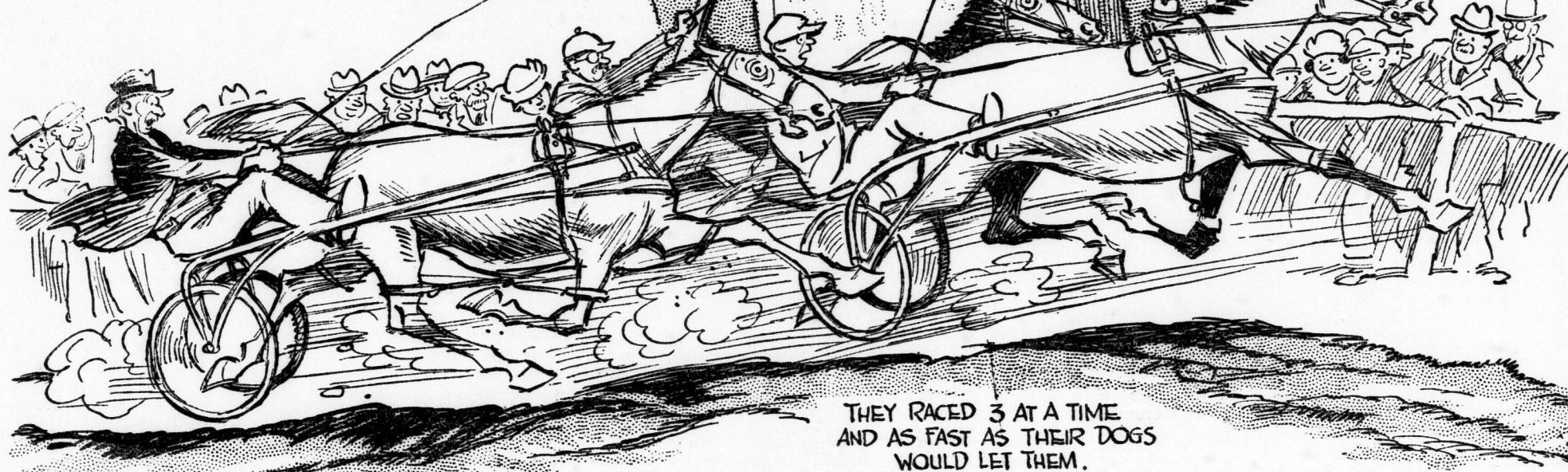


THE HOTEL FOLKS HAD NO BUSINESS TAKING 2 UNSUSPECTING CAFETERIA HOUNDS AND SETTING THEM DOWN IN PLAIN SIGHT OF \$400.00 WORTH — CITY PRICES — OF FOOD.

ONE GOOSE WOULD MAKE A CHRISTMAS DINNER FOR A WHOLE ORPHAN ASYLUM.



WE NEVER DISCOVERED WHETHER THE CONTEST WAS FOR THE BEST MILKER, HUMAN, OR THE BEST MILKER, BOVINE.



THEY RACED 3 AT A TIME AND AS FAST AS THEIR DOGS WOULD LET THEM.

For Three Quarters of a Century It Has Flourished in Rural Ontario—The Amazing Bar Room Window Display—Home-Cooking Display Guarded By Chicken Wire—Races That Made Duffer's Park Look Sick

By FRANK MANN HARRIS ("Sixbit")

WHEN London holds its big annual show it is satisfied to call it merely "The Western Fair"; and there are even critics snooty enough to object to the word "National," on the ground that it takes in too much territory. Buffalo was content with 1 hemisphere and christened its exhibition "The Pan-American." The Wembley affair struggled along pretty good for a couple of years under the title "The British Empire." But when Birdseye Centre—population 125 last census—throws its annual fall fair, which it has been doing for the past ¾ century, it don't stop at anything so puny as national, imperial or hemispheric boundaries. Not so. Letting go all bolts it proudly rears its banner to the breeze and advertises "The Birdseye Centre WORLD'S Fair."

And if you don't believe me, which I don't blame you much, I got the documents to prove it. Amongst other souvenirs of my visit last week I proudly cherish a nice red "First Prize" card—it had fell off a coopfull of Buff Orpingtons and found its way into my pocket in some mysterious manner—and on that card, in boxcar letters, it stands plain and bold, "World's Fair Birdseye Centre." And if that isn't enough there is on the same card a map of the world, too. So try and laugh that off, genteel—and suspicious—reader.

Right here I ask the referee for a couple minutes time out to explain that this which follows is a strictly veracious narrative. What I attempt, in my feeble way, to describe, I really saw with my own 2 eyes. What Mr. Frise depicts with his agile pencil, he actually witnessed. Everybody knows what writers and artists are morally, so our bare word should ought to be sufficient; but in addition each of us is ready and willing to back each other up in everything we write or draw, which will prove that our teamwork is excellent anyways. The only thing we have changed is the name of the place. We call it "Birdseye Centre" for various good reasons, 1 being that rural folks have long memories, and when we go back to this World's Fair—next year we hope and pray—they might remember what we said about them. Remember—and revenge theirself. The landlady of the "Grand Central," for instance, might cut us off after only our 3rd helping of pie. Which would be a pity.

Intriguing Odor of Fried Potatoes

PASSING rapidly over our morning drive through the autumn sunshine in the artist's palatial car—1 of the earliest and soundest vintage from a well-known maker, by the way—and mentioning only that I envied the journey with so many refinery and elevating anecdotes that my companion was forced to admit he hadn't enjoyed any funeral so much in years, we arrive at the moment when we made our entrance upon the scene of the *festa*, if you will pardon a dash of Russian. At 1st sight it appeared no different from any of the dozens of cross-road hamlets you pass about every 20 minutes on your road from here to wherever you're going. A tavern; a garage—nee blacksmith shop; a gen. store and postoffice combined; a church; a school; a townhall with de-funct Fritz machine-gun in front. That's all there is; but if you conclude that there isn't any more, Ethel Barrymore, you are making more errors than what old Peck did in the recent World's Series.

With the old "Rolls-Sometimes" safely parked in the stable-yard of "The Grand Central Hotel"

we stood for a moment or 2 on the front stoop of that hostelry. "What do we do 1st," says my accomplice, "take a look around—or eat?" Just then the front door opened and like sweet music on the breeze there floats out the intriguing odor of home-fried potatoes. Properly abashed for his tactless question, the artist hung his head and led the way indoors.

Inside, we turned in the wrong direction and found ourselves in what was once, I suspect, the bar. Only a bar in the bad old days of yore, but now—how much more. More like a drugstore now, if a drugstore is a place where they sell everything in the world except drugs. This bar had a window-display, no less; and I defy the whole of Yippy 2, to show a similar 1. This window display consisted of a bunch of bananas and a new flivver-tire; underneath the bananas were 3 drums lubricating oil, light, medium and heavy. Possibly the place where that humorist got the inspiration to call his column "Banana Oil." Other forms of liquid refreshment on tap in addition to the oil—4.4, pop, and similar palatable, harmless and refreshing beverages the same to you Mister Nickle and many of them. Candy-bars, ice cream cones and chewing gum on sale, too, for roisterers determined on having a real wild party.

Pay-As-You-Enter Eating

PASSING unscathed through all these temptations we came to the door of the dining room, only to find our way barred by a damsel demanding that we kick in with 65c apiece before putting on the feed bag. Pay-as-you-enter eating was sort of new to us and we shrewdly suspected that the charge is 15c more than the regular tax of half-a-buck. But other places besides Birdseye have been known to raise the ante when there is a rush of trade; and if they demand to see our money before turning us loose on the victuals—well, we can do our puny best to make sure they don't make too enormous profits on our custom. And, leave me tell you, we done so. If the management of that tavern showed any great margin of profit on the meal I watched my accomplice consume, then they are marvels of efficiency. As for myself—oh, I managed to peck around a bit. The artist said he was ashamed of me before I was ½ through, and it's no light feat to shame 1 of those birds I hope to inform you.

Anyways, it was the hotel folks' own fault. They had no business taking 2 unsuspecting cafeteria hounds and, without no preliminary warning, setting them down in plain sight of \$400.00 worth—city prices—of food, and saying, in effect: "There it is; so go to it and let your conscience, if any, be your guide." Stronger natures than ours, even, would of cracked under the strain. Speaking personal I will say that I haven't saw a similar layout of eatables since the last time I attended a combination chicken-supper-and-tea-meeting back in Wellington County last century. And Mr. Frise observed that all he needed was his sox full of barley-beards and his hair full of chaff to imagine he was setting down to a threshing-dinner on the dear old farm.

Four kinds of cake there was, not counting

such trifles as drop-cakes and cookies; five varieties of pickles, that is if you call coleslaw a pickle and not a regrettable error; butter—nice golden-yellow dairy butter—strewn carelessly every 2 feet of the table in ½ pound chunks; meat, potatoes and tea the waitress brought you, but for the rest you just had to reach. Nor did you have to reach far, because your plate was hemmed in by victuals on every side. Our chief regret was that we hadn't known what was coming so that we could of fasted a few days by way of training. Still, we didn't do so terrible bad. A subtle touch we noticed was that the old metal cocktail-shaker had been converted into a celery-container. Talk about beating your swords into plowshares!

The World's Fair was Calling

BUT sooner or later—in this case later—all good things come to an end, even an appetite. Sadly surveying all the good things we were leaving behind, and mourning the fact that we hadn't fetched a sack or something along, we arose from the vestal board, if that word vestal isn't right I hope the proofreader fixes it. We would of admired to stay longer, but into our ears there crept the faint melody of a trombone soloing that swell selection about "the Miseries of Al Trovatore." The World's Fair was calling; and although walking, or any form of physical exercise, right then was a bigger misery than anything Al Trovatore ever suffered, we must be on our way. Our loving employer had sent us to see the fair and duty must be did; besides if we lingered any longer we might be tempted to try just 1 more cut of pie. Which would of been a mistake.

It wasn't far to walk, praise be. Just a block or 2 down the road—that is if there had been any blocks—there was a little ticket-booth. Beside that booth was a gate that looked like the entrance to a farm-lane. You turned through that gate and—well, there you were. Other exhibitions go in for long approaches and gorgeous gateways; but at Birdseye you step right into the middle of the throng.

And when I say "a throng" I mean just plain that. When I tell you that the grounds were crowded I am not indulging in any poetic licentiousness. My worthy colleague estimated the attendance at five thousand; my own guess was something around three; but neither of us is any Einstein when it comes to handling figures over 10 or a dozen, so we may both of been all wet. But there were plenty people anyways. If there was any fall plowing being done that afternoon for 10 miles in any direction, then I am more mistaken than customary.

And such carefree and merry people, too, especially when you consider what a perilous time this is. In spite of posters placarded on every fence in the neighborhood advising the voters to (1) Defeat King and Save the Country or (2) Elect King and Save the Country, those Birdseye Centre merry-makers didn't seem to even realize that the country needed saving. The way they went about their holidaying you would imagine that the country is capable of tottering along another couple of years or 2, no matter who is in the pilot-house in Ottawa. Kings may come

and Meighens may go; but when fair-day rolls round Birdseye Centre puts on its best suit and goes out to have a good time. Further and more they have it.

Like a Musical Medley

ANY other Fair I ever been to it would be possible to start at 1 spot and gradually work your way around, visiting each attraction in turn. But not at the World's Fair. Space is at a premium on the grounds and things have to be sort of jumbled up like a musical medley or hash. The hot-dog vendor must wield his fork with discretion or else he is apt to stop a wheel-of-fortune in mid-whirl. If your aim is too high in trying to sock the nigger on the head for cigars, you are apt as not to bean 1 of the brass bandmen and make him blow a rancid note. The prize jar of plum preserves rests on the very edge of the prize water-color painting. And so on. So if these impressions of mine strike you as a bit tangled you will know that it is the fault of crowded exhibits rather than a disorderly mind. At least I hope you will think so.

There were only 2 buildings for exhibits—a smaller devoted to poultry on the hoof, and where we saw geese so big that just 1 would make a Christmas dinner for a whole orphan asylum with enough goose-grease left over to pull 'em through a epidemic of whooping cough. And the main building—the capacity of a fair-size barn—containing everything else you could mention all the way from Art to Vegetables.

What Vegetables they were, too. We saw mangels that looked like 5.9 shells and probably felt to weigh the same after you had been heaving them up onto a wagon for half a day or so. Carrots that only needed to have their small ends shaped a bit to make swell Indian clubs. Potatoes smooth and pretty enough to use for ornaments on the marble-topped table in the front room, and big enough to throw at a hockey referee. Corn cobs of such a size that just to chew your way along 1 once would be a fair chore for the average eater. Crops must of been good out Birdseye way if the samples they sent to the Fair is any evidence.

And then there was Art of all kinds and Fancywork of every description and some you couldn't describe. Being firm believers in the principles of Division of Labor and Every Man to his Own Trade, it was decided that my confrere (read that 1 and weep) should attend to the Art while I examined the Fancywork. 2 minutes later we found ourselves side by side peering through the chicken-wire screen which guarded the display of Home Cooking. Far as we were concerned they didn't need any screen: that Grand Central dinner was still too adjacent for us to take any more than a platonic interest in any cooking. Still and all it was very majestic and soothing to look at, even if it didn't tempt you for the time being. We were much cheered and uplifted to discover that there is still left a place on earth where the housewives haven't forgot the craft of making 2-handed layer-cake. A 2-handed layer cake, I might explain, is 1 that has so many layers that when your hostess pres-

ents you off a hunk, you have to use both your hands to lift it.

The Gambling was Terrific

BUT enough of indoor sports and amusements. Outside was where the real doings were. Birdseye Centre folks can, we imagine, feast their eyes on good cooking and good vegetables any day in the week; but it isn't every day they get a chance to toss their hard-earned jack in a joust with Fortune by means of a Wheel of Fortune or Housey-Housey game. The gambling, I regret to report, was terrific. No less than 3 Wheels of Fortune were in full blast; the prizes at all of them blankets worth—so the proprietors said and surely they wouldn't lie—fifteen berries a copy. And to see those Birdseye folks bucking the wheel at a dime per buck was to get a faint idea of what Monte Carlo must be like. If anybody won a blanket they done it while we weren't looking, so I guess the old percentage must of been working against the customers.

And the Housey-Housey games were just as popular. Aluminum cooking utensils were the prizes at these games; at least we thought they were till Mr. F. after squandering no less than 30c cash, which I hope if he tries to ring it in on his expense sheet the auditor nicks him—after spending 30c, I say, managed to get five in a row before anybody else did. Then we discovered that the aluminum was only given when a full game was running, so my friend dragged down only a box of lollipops. Probably it was just as well, at that; because if he had win a double-boiler he would of made me carry it on the ground that he needed his hands for sketching.

But we mustn't let our enthusiasm for the Monte Carlo end of the festival make us overlook its Woodbine aspect. Real horse races, would you believe it, and all for the same price of admission; and not even Thorncliffe or the Woodbine ever showed a sight which captivated my personal fancy more than the Birdseye Centre Judges' Stand—packed to overflowing with the Presiding Judge and as many of his friends as could jimmy their way in and looking like it might fall over on its side any moment. Later we discovered that our fears on these grounds were needless; we went round to the back of the judges' stand and found that its low side had been reinforced and underpinned—with a stick of cordwood.

The races themselves were a joy to all beholders. As is always the case in trotting matches the beagle with the least speed was always the 1 which wore the most toe-weights, ankle-boots and similar doodads. But they raced, nevertheless, 3 at a time and as fast as their old dogs would let them; and on that track it was considerable of a feat to run at all. Not so terrible rough, but more what you would call lumpy; put a ¼-mile track on 1 of the less smooth portions of P. . . . and you would about have a duplicate. When, after a heat, the Judge announced the time as 2:20, I says, "Gee, Jim, I would like to own that 1." "What," he responds, "the horse?" "No," I replies, "the stop-watch." Later on we

learned that the 2:20 was for ¾ of a mile, which seemed a lot more reasonable.

The Solemn Milking Contest

IN the infield of the race-track they did the judging of the draft-and-work horses. I know nothing whatever about draft-horses and care less; so all I will say was that there were several of them looked like they could beat some of the noble Thoroughbreds I have wagered on this Autumn.

And in odd corners of the grounds you would come across the cattle section and the swine section and the sheep section, and right in the middle of all these animal sections was the Automobile Show. Nor was the latter playing to empty chairs by any means; a motor car dealer has a lot better chance doing business around Birdseye than what he would have around many a newspaper office, judging from what we saw on the roads and parking-spaces. The old buggy with the horse that could drive itself in the moonlight has, we take it, given way very largely to the gasoline chariot with the driver that can steer 1-handed.

I mustn't forget a word or 2 about the milking contest. Five solemn-faced lads milking away at five solemn-faced cows as if their lives depended on it; foaming pails of milk upon the ground; crowds standing in a circle watching; and judges passing slowly and not unimportantly from contestant to contestant. We watched it for quite a while and probably would of enjoyed it better if we could only have discovered whether the contest was for the Best Milker, Human, or the Best Milker, Bovine. We still don't know; but I've managed to quit worrying by now.

Nor can I pass over the sheep without a paragraph. If there is anything in the animal universe less interesting than a sheep, unless it is a rabbit, I don't know it. But little as I am in love with them I couldn't help being interested in the layout 1 exhibitor had for getting his exhibit to the fair. Owing a big limousine—not a lizzie, but 1 of the kind you hope to own some day when somebody dies and leaves you plenty—owning a big limousine, I say, he had combined business and pleasure and brought his pets by the same means that he brought himself. In the rear seat of the car were no less than 3 full grown sheep; on the running-board at the side was a crate containing a 4th; and in a small trailer hooked on behind were no less than 6 more. "There," I says to my associate, "there is what you might call a Self-Contained and Self-Sustaining Home on Wheels. With those sheep for companions a man might travel for a indefinite period, clothing himself with the wool and knocking off the odd lamb whenever he run short of meat."

"Sure he could," agrees Mr. Frise, "and what's more he could probably grow a little patch of mint on the top of the car and have mint-sau—." But I cut him off short realizing that the strain of so much revelry would lead him to tell on his mind and that pretty soon he would be as bad as his companion. So with many a fond backward glance, especially at some loaded apple-trees that looked ungarded but you can't never be sure, we rolled away from Birdseye Centre promising each other that next year we will, if permitted, go to the World's Fair again; and this time we will bring along our appetites.

The homeward journey was made not that anybody gives a hoot without untoward incident except that about halfway the old boiler developed a flat tire. It was pitch-dark by then; also it was raining steadily; and changing tires under those conditions is not no bed of roses as the poet puts it. In a farmhouse nearby a phonograph was playing; the selection it was grinding out was that classical piece about "The End of a Perfect Day." And this is on the up-and-up—in spite of flat tire, damp darkness, and wet rain, both Mr. Frise and self felt that the selection was a singularly appropriate 1.

And if there are any higher words of praise than that for the kind of time the Birdseye Centre World's Fair showed us, I would admire to know what they are.

AN ARTFUL MINX

IN Lancashire long courtships are the rule rather than the exception, a custom which gave Mr. Keighley Snowden an opening for one of his best stories.

A couple had been courting for quite a long while. The young man, however, got "no forrader," and the girl began to get impatient. At length, one night, while out for a walk, greatly daring, he made bold to put his arm around her waist.

Finding she showed no displeasure, he ventured to remark after a while:

"Mary, my lass, do you think I'm making progress?"

"Aye, lad, you're holding your own," she replied.—Pearson's Weekly.

Or Put It Out

I'VE often wondered how some of these famous animal trappers get on when they have to get the cat in at night.—Passing Show.