

Collection #  
P 0914

**AURORA FARMERS' FAIR PHOTOGRAPHS,  
CA. 1910S-1920S**

Collection Information	1
Historical Sketch	2
Scope and Content Note	3
Contents	3

Processed by

Barbara Quigley  
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 3 OVA photograph folders

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1910s–1920s

PROVENANCE: Gift from the Hillforest Historical Foundation, Inc., of Aurora, Indiana, 1991

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1991.0813X

NOTES:

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Aurora Farmers' Fair is the oldest street festival in Indiana. It is held annually in the fall in the town of Aurora, along the banks of the Ohio River, in Dearborn County.

The festival was conceived when Clarence B. Wilson had an idea in January 1908 to hold an agricultural show. He discussed it with Edward Chambers, a local businessman and chicken fancier; William Ketcham, a prominent farmer in the county; public school superintendent Joseph R. Houston; Adam Hill, a wharf-boat owner and local coal merchant; and William Hoskins, a manufacturer.

The first fair drew large crowds to Aurora. People arrived in horse-drawn buggies and wagons, on horseback, and a few in automobiles. They came from nearby Ohio, Switzerland, Ripley, Jennings, and other counties, as well as from across the river in Kentucky and Ohio.

Wilson chaired the second fair and Chambers chaired the third. In 1912, Robert L. Johnson was elected president of the Fair Association, a position he held until 1959, with the exception of two years when William Neukom and T. J. Martin held the office for one year each. In 1940, a building on the riverfront was purchased from the Indianapolis Chair Company to house exhibits for the fair. Previously, exhibits had been held in an old tobacco warehouse on Exporting Street. Eventually, a midway was formed on Second and Main streets where concessions were offered, and stage shows were added. A prominent feature of the fair is a parade.

In 1958, more than 25,000 people attended the fair, which had more than 1,600 exhibit entries – twice the number than when the fair had first been held a half century earlier. In 1959, the Aurora Business Men's Association asked the Aurora Lions Club to take over sponsorship and management of the fair. As of 2025, the Lions have continued to organize the fair every year.

### Sources:

Aurora Farmers Fair. "History of the Fair" [History | Aurora Farmers Fair](#) Accessed 1 October 2025.

Harmeyer, Steven. "The 116<sup>th</sup> annual Aurora Farmers Fair begins on Wednesday" [The 116th annual Aurora Farmers Fair begins on Wednesday](#) Accessed 1 October 2025.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of six black-and-white photographs of the Aurora Farmers' Fair in Dearborn County, Indiana, ca. 1910s-1920s. Five of the photos show parade floats and the other shows the field corn competition.

## CONTENTS

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Field corn competition at the Aurora Farmers' Fair – matted photograph shows people gathered outdoors by makeshift tables holding many ears of corn [ca. 1910].

Three matted photos of parade floats – one is of a float that has a sign that says “Courtesy of Farmers Fair Committee;” two are of the Bovard & Smith Funeral Directors float (photos by Otto White of North Vernon, Ind. [ca. 1910s]).

Automobile decorated as a parade float with five girls in it; a pennant across the windshield says “St. Mary” – believed to be a St. Mary's Catholic Church float [ca. 1920s].

Patriotic float carrying a soldier and sailor at the front; a man dressed as Uncle Sam and a woman with a flag draped across her dress hold a 48-star flag. Storefronts are in the background, perhaps on Aurora's Main Street (photo by Spaeth's Oak Leaf Studio of Evansville, Ind., ca. 1925) [photographer Fredrick Kastner Spaeth was born and died in Aurora (1873–1950)].

### CONTAINER

OVA Photographs,  
Folder 1

OVA Photographs,  
Folder 2

OVA Photographs,  
Folder 3

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Folder 3

