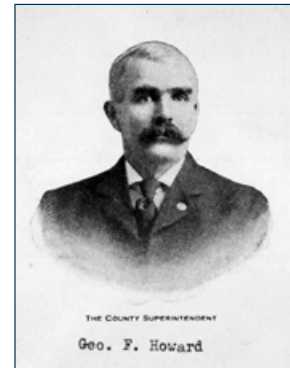


HIGHLIGHTS FROM HISTORY

Our Souvenir Book with the story and pictures of 150 years of the Olmsted County Fair is available. The cost is \$5.00 plus postage. Contact us at History@olmstedcountyfair.com

Faces From the Past

George Howard was Olmsted County Superintendant of Schools from 1903 to 1909. He was very interested in keeping the County Fair alive and worked with the school children as he developed projects they could work on during the summer such as corn, potatoes, baking and sewing. The results of their work would be exhibited at the Fair each fall. Mr. Howard is considered to be the one who started the Boys & Girls Clubs in Olmsted County. These clubs were the forerunners of 4-H; similar groups were soon to be found in many areas of the country.

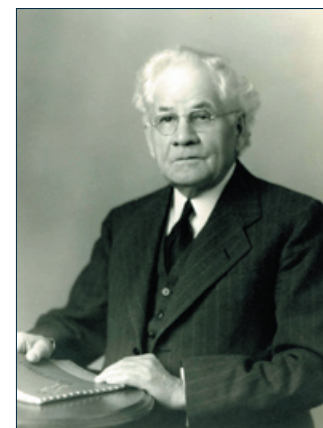


William Mercer was Olmsted County School Superintendant from 1909 to 1939. He continued the work of George Howard in encouraging rural school students to participate in project work that would show their achievement and skills in crop growing, livestock raising and family living. During his tenure the 4-H movement grew rapidly until the Great Depression interrupted events such as County Fairs for a few years.



Both George Howard and William Mercer served on the Fair Board during their time as School Superintendant. Mr. Mercer was an avid photographer and took many pictures of displays and events at the annual fair. From those photographs we are able to see just what it was like to participate in the Olmsted County Fair in the early 20th century.

Dr. Christopher Graham is perhaps the greatest benefactor of the Olmsted County Fair. He was a partner of the Mayo doctors when they established their Clinic in Rochester. He had also been a teacher in the rural schools of Olmsted County before receiving his medical degree. He was a farmer at heart for that is how he had grown up and after retirement from the Mayo Clinic, he concentrated on his agricultural interests. He followed the School Fairs and saw the importance of the Boys & Girls Club work. He noticed that the Fair was an excellent place for rural and urban residents of Olmsted County to show the results of their labor, to share ideas and to have friendly competitions. He enjoyed bringing his Holstein cattle, Orpington chickens and many varieties of flowers to the Fair and he was often found in the winner's circle. In 1912 Dr. Graham tried unsuccessfully to purchase the property that was being rented for the Fair. When that didn't materialize, he leased a portion of his own farm to the Agricultural Association and that is the location we still use. On October 22, 1919, Dr. and Mrs. Graham gifted this property to Olmsted County for use as the permanent site of the Olmsted County Fair.



You can read more about these men and others in the 150th Anniversary Fair Souvenir Book.