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WOMEN'S WORK IN FAIR EXHIBITS

By BLANCHE E. HYDE



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WOMEN'S WORK IN FAIR EXHIBITS

By BLANCHE E. HYDE

Two or more generations ago the annual fair was largely a case of "Come, Mother, I've got the big pumpkin and the apples; bring your new quilt and the butter from the last churning and we'll start for the Fair!"

But the years bring changes in needs and customs, and nowhere is this more apparent than in fair exhibits.

The "glory" which came to the exhibitor of the biggest pumpkin and like monstrosities has ceased to be a sufficient reward. Instead a tribute of cold cash is expected, and so the early spirit of friendly rivalry has come to be almost a battle for gold. This is true in practically all departments, and it is little wonder that many of our fairs have become somewhat commercialized, in that many of the older and larger ones are now run by a paid secretary, who in many cases is obliged to make the fair a financial success, or at least a self-supporting proposition.

Revenue is obtained by the sale of concessions, by advertising, by gate receipts, and by the sale of seats in the grandstand, and some times by appropriations or subscriptions. After the necessary expenses are met the money is used to pay the premiums in the different departments provided money premiums are offered. In many cases the premiums taken at local fairs provide a substantial sum, and to some the winning of the premium money is the main feature of the fair, instead of the fostering of friendly relationships, or the exchange of ideas and methods, thus making the competition more commercial than educational.

As this bulletin is to deal more with displays of women's work, the cows, pigs, turnips, corn and squash can be left in the barns and on the shelves to fight for supremacy, each in its own department, and we will consider the details of women's work.

Women's part in fairs generally consists of arranging or helping to arrange the community exhibits, in making premium lists, and planning and managing the women's departments in community, county and state fairs.

Place of Exhibit.—The writer has attended fairs held in almost every conceivable type of place, from beautiful exhibit buildings, built for the purpose on land owned by fair associations, to temporary booths set up on vacant lots; exhibits arranged in barns and barn yards of public-spirited citizens whose places are conveniently located; in school houses, community halls

and municipal auditoriums. The place, however, makes no difference. A fair held in a barn may be a far greater factor in the education and social life of a community, especially if everyone puts his shoulder to the wheel, than one held in the most splendidly equipped building.

Division of Space.—In community fairs held in local halls or schools with ample floor space, the division of the space for the different agricultural products and for women's work, with the livestock quartered outside, is a much more simple matter than the apportioning of community space in a county fair.

In the larger fairs where there are community exhibits the space allotted for these may be equal in size or planned in proportion to the population.

Some fair associations do not, however, consider the size of the population, but apportion equal space to all communities.

In fairs where the exhibits are classified the size of the space devoted to the different classes is generally regulated by the amount of the exhibit material shown the previous year.

A sort of booth arrangement dividing the exhibits or classes is generally liked better than continuous shelves where it is difficult to see where one exhibit ends and another begins. Some satisfactory booth apportionments are:

8 feet long by 3 feet 8 inches deep or
12 feet long by 3 feet 8 inches deep

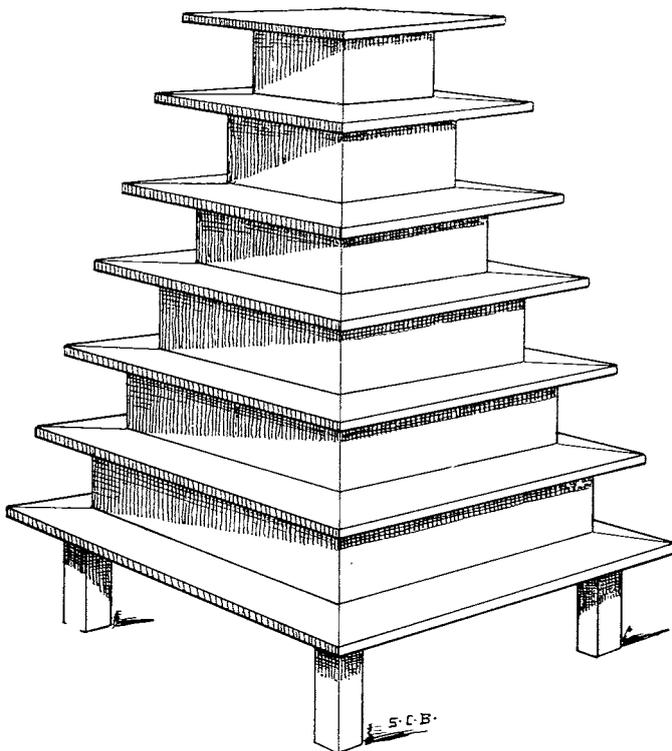
One of the larger fairs allots spaces 15 feet square to its communities.

The coverings, or roofs, over booths or exhibits are being gradually done away with, as they detract from the general effect of space and break up the unified effect.

Exhibit Shelves and Racks.—Unfortunately in most fairs these are changed each year, but with the growing interest in fairs, permanent buildings will be built with permanent shelves or racks and definite booth arrangements.

If the space is limited an arrangement of screens which will furnish exhibit space on both sides will be found quite satisfactory. These screens may also serve as dividing lines between exhibits. Portable shelves, stands, tables or racks similar to those used by commercial firms will be found more economical than built-in shelves, if these have to be taken down after the fair. The portable ones can be stored from year to year. Several of these are illustrated.

The old type of exhibit rack arranged like a flight of steps, or stairs, is gradually passing away. A combination of this with



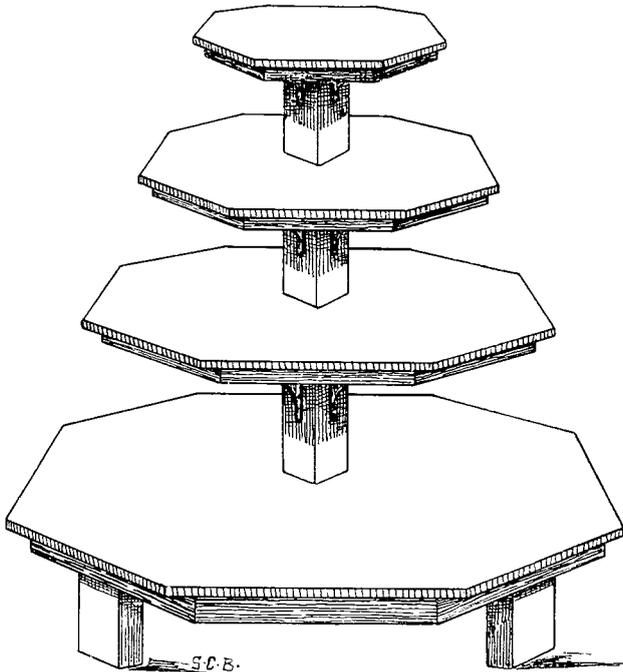
GOOD TYPE OF PORTABLE EXHIBIT RACK

a wider shelf arrangement is found quite satisfactory for some community booths.

The illustrations showing community booths will give an idea of this type.

The planning of exhibit cases for baked goods in the food departments offers quite a serious problem. It goes without saying that all baked goods should be covered, and if possible glass cases should be used. Many fairs depend on borrowing glass showcases from local stores. Obviously no one store is willing to loan many of these, even for the few days of the fair, therefore if a large amount of food is to be taken care of the varied types of show cases present an appearance that is anything but uniform and attractive. Too often, too, these cases are placed so far below the eye that one sees only the top of the food displayed. Neither should the top of the cases be used as a shelf for placing other exhibit articles or equipment.

The care of dairy products, such as butter, cheese, milk and eggs in a community's general exhibit, needs careful planning,



ANOTHER GOOD TYPE OF PORTABLE EXHIBIT RACK

as these should be kept cool if not ice cold. If ice cannot be provided, a well-made iceless refrigerator can be used and will also serve as an exhibit and demonstration. The writer has seen ice in a pan used very successfully in a glass show case. This method, however, requires frequent renewing.

The ideal equipment to take care of baked goods would be uniform glass cases for all community booths with several of the same type for the general department of foods and pantry stores. A modern refrigerator with glass front would also add much in both convenience and beauty.

An excellent suggestion would be for each community to raise money for the purchase of suitable exhibit cases for the local fair, and to use in the community booths at the county fair.

Decorations.—These are a very important feature of all fairs.

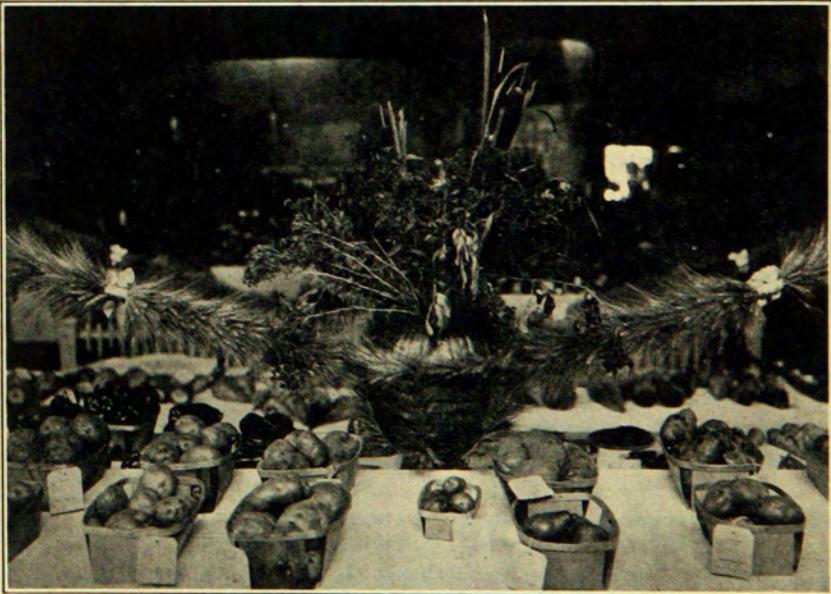
As far as possible it is a good plan to use natural decorations instead of those of crepe paper or artificial flowers. Frequently the exhibits themselves will form the only needed decoration, and where it is possible to make them answer for the decorations the display is especially effective.

Branches of fir or spruce, and pine cones, or some of the feathery grasses give a much more pleasing effect than any amount of crepe paper.

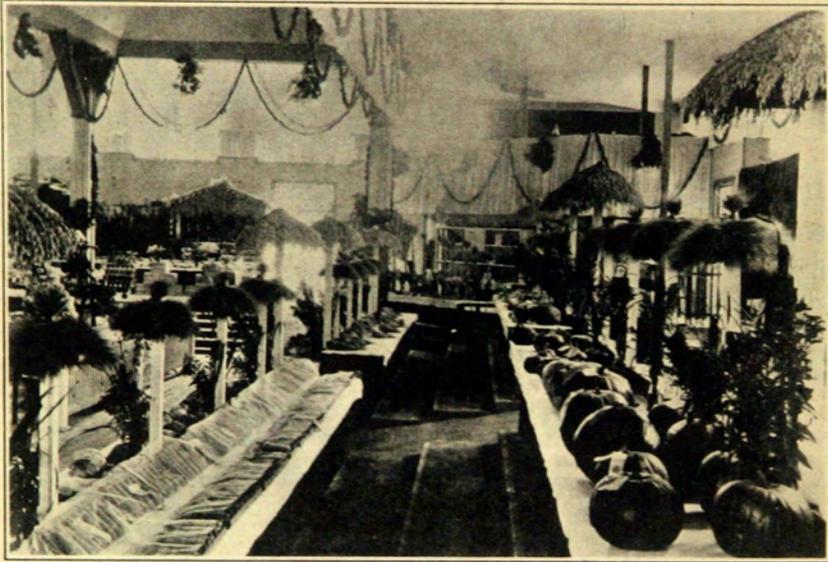
Where the building is large and roughly finished it is often necessary to conceal rafters or ugly posts. This may be done by large branches and twining vines, or by bunting. Decorations of bunting may often be rented for the period of the fair, but several months notice should be given to the decorator in order that he may have ample time to prepare the desired effects. If the type of material and design desired is of a kind that the decorator can rent frequently the expense for renting will not be large.

If the flag is used the regulations prescribed for its use should be carefully observed.

One of the most effective decorations seen by the writer was of wheat heads, made into a golden rope and festooned between baskets of flowers and grasses. The baskets themselves were of large pumpkins held upright in wire frames. "Gorgeous" was the only word possible to use in describing the effect. Another pleasing effect was that produced by lamp shades made of oats. The lamps themselves were made of wood painted white, and the effect given was a lamp shade of gold. At intervals to



BASKETS OF GOLDEN PUMPKINS FILLED WITH FLOWERS, AND ROPES OF WHEAT HEADS



LAMP SHADES OF OATS

offset the lamps were huge baskets of brilliantly colored fruits. Some of these types of decorations are shown in the illustrations.

Flowers are always attractive as decorations, but should be arranged with care. When used as a decoration flowers of the same kind used thruout a booth will give a better effect than a large variety. If wide-mouthed vases cannot be obtained, suitable receptacles can generally be borrowed at a local store, or from a local florist. Preserve jars occasionally will answer but are not advisable. Home-made baskets are especially suitable. Choose flowers which have good keeping qualities and do not shed pollen, or if it is necessary to renew them see that fresh flowers are in place early in the morning before the buildings are open to the public.

A rather formal, or balanced effect in the use of flowers is generally found pleasing at fair exhibits. As the character of the exhibits of women's work is often informal, if the containers of flowers are balanced on the two sides of the booth or at definite intervals in a general exhibit a much more attractive effect is obtained.

Exhibit Material.—The aim of all exhibitors should be to exhibit work of such grade that it shall receive a premium.

One difficulty in all fairs is the establishing of good standards of work, and keeping all exhibits up to this standard. On the other hand there is danger that in the zeal to accomplish

this the requirements may be set so high that would-be exhibitors become discouraged and lose their enthusiasm about exhibiting.

Then again, too much material is apt to be displayed which has no educational, social or economic value. The question therefore arises—What constitutes good exhibit material?

The article exhibited should have some reason for being entered; that is, it should be either useful or beautiful. The latter term should include color, design and workmanship.

Articles exhibited must be as near perfect as possible in all points of construction, regardless of the class in which they are entered.

Another characteristic often neglected is that elusive one known as "interesting."

Learn to discern what forms an interesting exhibit. To sum up, three points to be kept in mind are, useful, beautiful, or interesting. A square of unbleached domestic with a plain hem around the edge to use as a tablecloth or a flour sack hemmed to serve as a tea-towel may be useful and also economical, but it is neither beautiful nor interesting, and would not be good exhibit material.

A set of underwear for a child made from flour sacks might not be beautiful but it would be both useful and interesting and would be good exhibit material. Its value would be largely because of the economy it suggests.

An apron of unbleached domestic decorated with elaborate applique may be both useful and beautiful but such decoration has almost ceased to be interesting because it has been almost overdone. Then too the amount of work required is entirely out of proportion to the worth of the material on which it is put.

The needlework exhibits seem to be prone to contain articles which are not only out of date but the need for which is often obsolete thru changing customs.

Classifications and premium lists of needlework departments should be done over frequently for there are just as many styles and changes in needlework as in clothing. There are always fewer changes necessary in the premium lists for foods and pantry stores.

The articles entered in needlework departments should not only be up-to-date from a standpoint of style and usage, but in good condition also.

No article which has once received a premium should be entered again. This will require the careful keeping of records. Repeaters are often found in exhibits of needlework and canned goods.

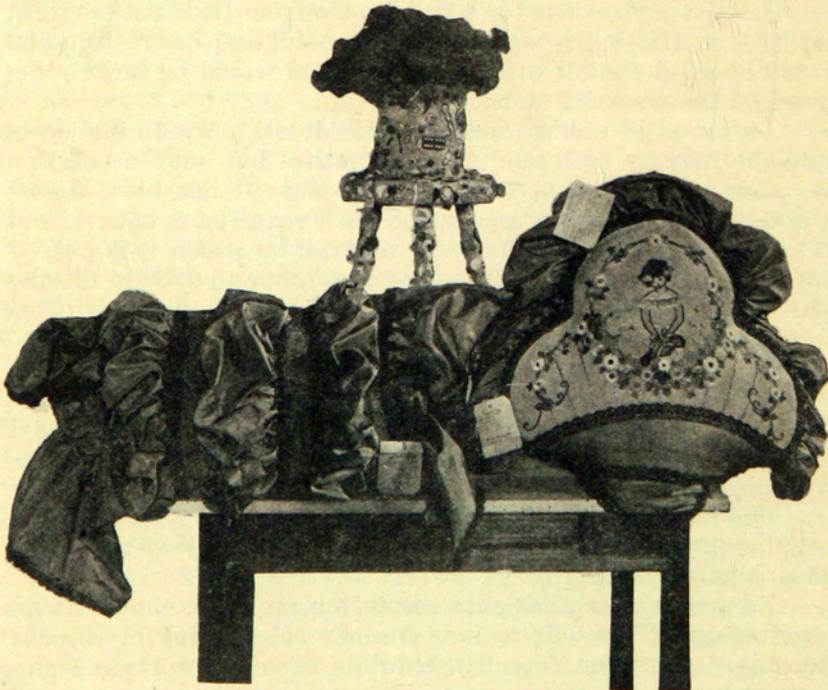
In regard to the usefulness of an article, the suitability of the article in all points for the use to which it is to be put, should be carefully considered.

For example, the first requirement of a sofa pillow or sofa cushion should be something soft and smooth, against which one might place his head if necessary. A pillow with a crocheted cover of hard filet thread would be very scratchy and unpleasant. Such a type would not be suitable to the use of a sofa cushion.

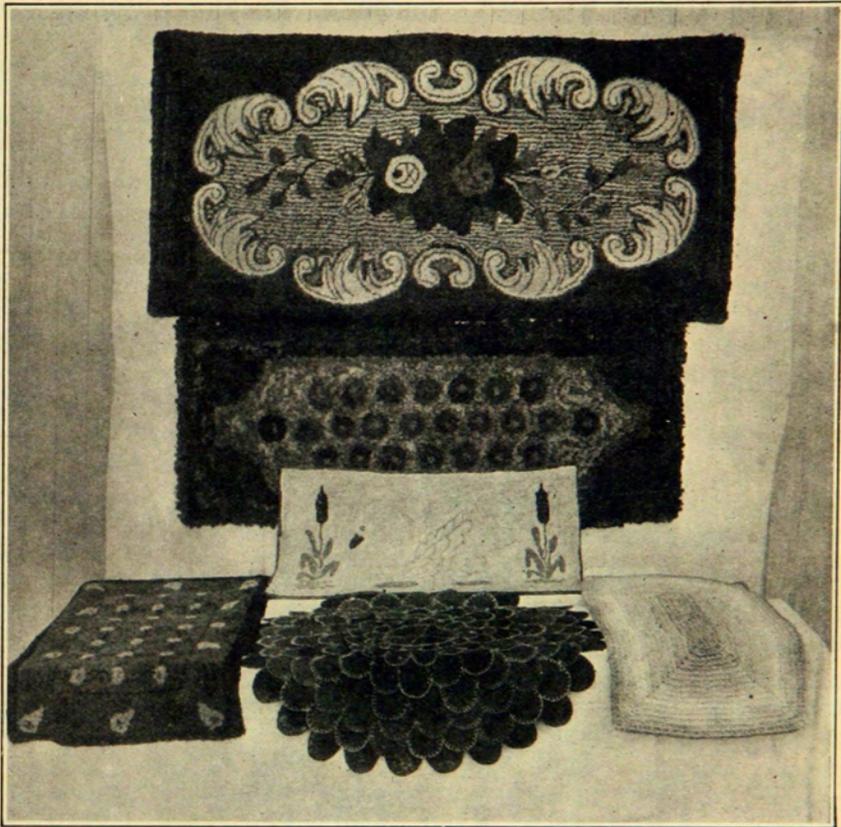
The best style of sofa cushions now are seldom hand decorated with embroidery or crochet but instead are covered with material to match or harmonize with the piece of furniture on which they will be used, or a material of a color and design which can be used in any room or with any piece of furniture.

The white embroidered lingerie or infants' pillows are exceptions to this rule.

An article is not beautiful if it is unsuitable to the purpose for which it is planned. The unsuitability of articles is often apparent in the design or pattern selected for embroidery or crochet. Most designs for embroidery which is exhibited at fairs are purchased already stamped on material, or the pattern, all ready to transfer by means of a hot iron, is purchased. Exhib-



EXAMPLES OF POOR EXHIBIT MATERIAL



HOME-MADE RUGS OF GOOD DESIGN ARE EXCELLENT EXHIBIT MATERIAL

itors seldom make their own designs. They should, however, at least be able to adapt the patterns to the shape of the articles on which they are to be used.

Further details as to good and bad points of different kinds of needlecraft may be obtained on application to the Extension Service at the Colorado Agricultural College, where package demonstrations and mimeographed circulars are available, which will be useful for club meetings or fairs.

In the food exhibits taste, flavor and economy of time, effort and money should figure more than they do. The community and smaller fairs should make an effort to stress exhibits of plainer foods, breads and simple kinds of cake, perfect in appearance, texture and flavor, instead of exhibiting so many elaborate layer cakes with expensive fillings and frostings.

Perfection of product is almost an essential requirement where foods are concerned.

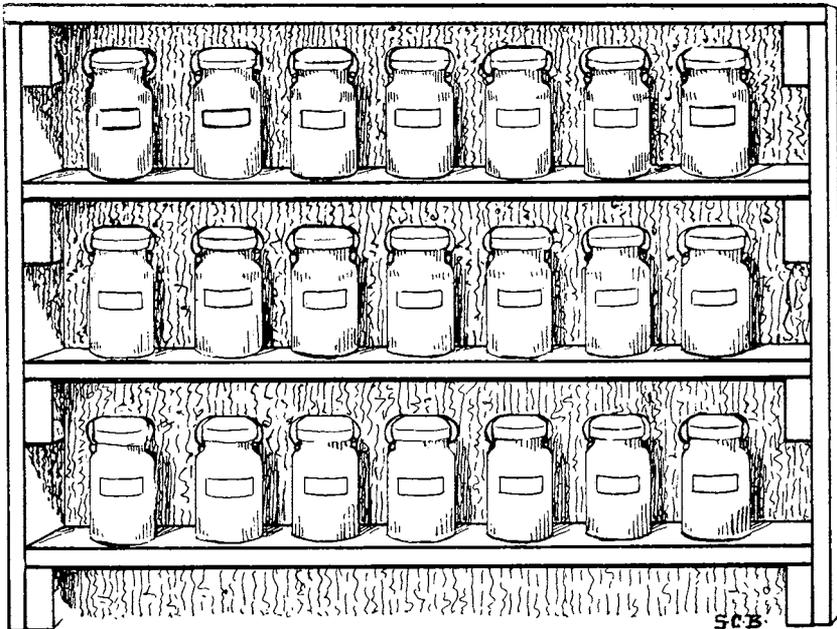
Certain foods are not especially suited for exhibits at fairs, especially if the exhibit is to remain in place for several days.

Pies of all kinds make an unattractive exhibit, especially after being cut for judging. This is particularly true of pies topped with meringue or one-crust pies. In fact, any pie after it is cut is anything but pleasing exhibit material.

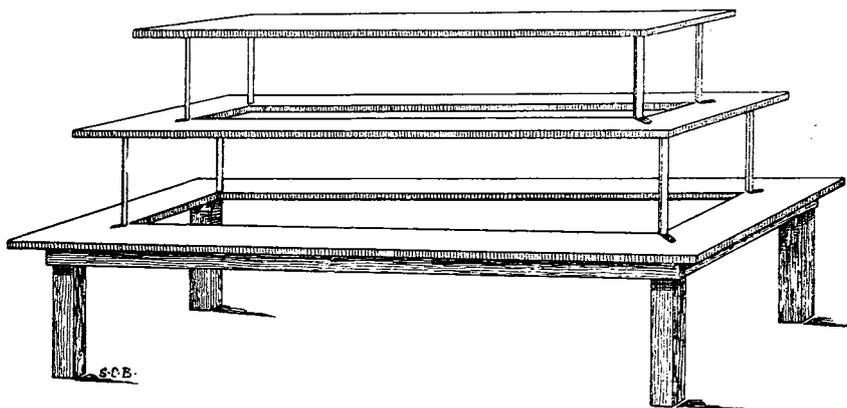
Too much cannot be said about the need for uniformity in the food, pantry stores and canned goods department. In the larger fairs definite requirements should be stated as to the size and shape of loaves of bread and loaf and layer cakes. It might be a good idea, too, to limit the number of layers and to suggest more digestible fillings.

Much of the food exhibited has to be prepared the day before, and is often transported a long distance, and this factor enters very much into what should be listed in the premium list.

Uniform containers for all canned goods should be insisted upon. Pint jars are preferable to quarts unless corn is to be canned on the cob, or asparagus to be canned whole.



JARS OF UNIFORM SIZE AND MAKE GIVE A PLEASING EFFECT



PORTABLE RACK WHICH WILL ALLOW FOR ILLUMINATION OF EXHIBITS

One of the illustrations shows the pleasing effect of a number of jars of the same size. Further attractiveness may be given exhibits of foods and pantry stores by the grouping of exhibits of the same type or same color.

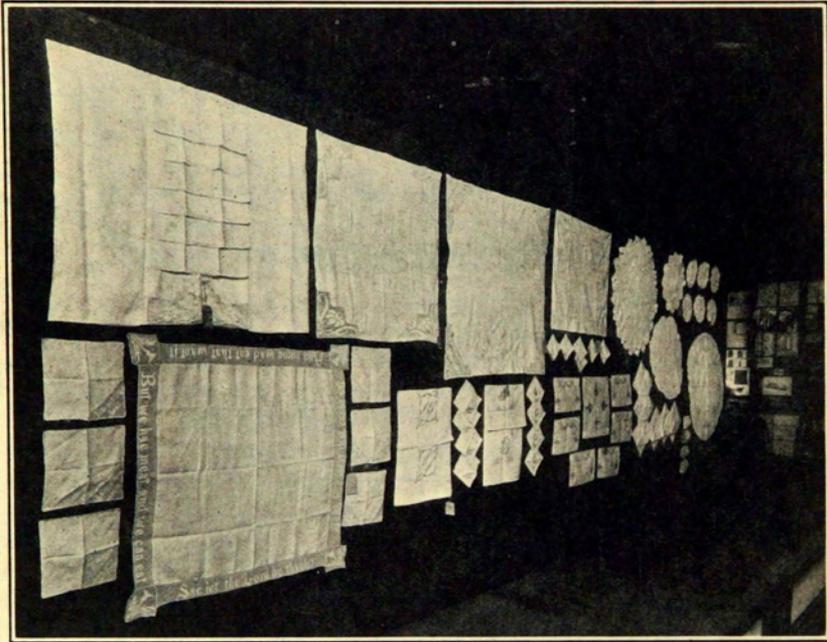
The color effects of the canned goods and jellies may be greatly enhanced by placing on open shelves covered with tissue, and the placing of lights behind to illuminate the exhibit.

Information regarding foods, and collections of recipes may be obtained by writing to the Extension Service at the Colorado Agricultural College.

In connection with the worthwhileness of exhibits, let us suggest that certain of the premiums, in the food and needlework departments as well as in the community exhibits, require that the exhibit shall be accompanied by a card giving the cost of the article and the length of time taken to produce it. In the foods and canned goods, the exhibit might be accompanied by the recipe. A similar method has been used in needlework departments for sometime in connection with the exhibits of remodeled garments, requiring that the garment shall be accompanied by a picture or description of the garment from which it was made, together with the cost of the remodeled garment. To this should also be added the amount of time consumed in construction.

To use this method with elaborate layer cakes and also in the needlework with center pieces decorated with intricate designs of embroidery and crochet, would no doubt do much to change the character of exhibits into something more worthwhile.

Classification of Entries.—Much confusion is saved if articles are properly classified. While different classifications may be used, that of the type of work in sewing, the kind of garment



A WELL-ARRANGED EXHIBIT OF NEEDLEWORK

in clothing, the finished product in foods or the method used in canning, has been found most satisfactory.

In needlework particularly if we undertake to classify articles according to their uses, we should lose all opportunity for comparison as to quality of work.

There is less trouble in the classification of exhibits in foods, pantry stores and canned goods, than in needlework but nevertheless the person in charge of entering the exhibits should be an authority whose word should not be questioned in placing the articles in the correct class. The practice of giving or sending entry tags to exhibitors to fill out themselves is an extremely poor one, and often makes considerable extra work for the superintendent and judge.

There are various types of entry tags, but the writer cannot stress too strongly her disapproval of the type which has the exhibitor's name folded back under the tag. In fact some scheme should be worked out by which the exhibitor's number would be changed in different classes, thus preventing any possibility of the number being recognized.

In the departments of **pantry stores** and **baked goods** the following classes will be found satisfactory: Canned fruits, pre-

serves, jams, marmalades, jellies, canned vegetables, canned meats, dried foods, pickles and relishes, raised breads, quick breads, cakes, cookies, pastry, dairy products and miscellaneous.

Certain suggestions or requirements might be listed at the beginning of each class, and if desired a special class might be included for jellies made with commercial pectin. This would be especially appreciated in districts where the principal fruit contained little or no pectin.

Under **needlework** the following classes seem to cover the general field: Hand-sewed articles, home-made clothing, remodeled garments and articles for household use; quilts and counterpanes, crochet, knitted articles, white embroidery, colored embroidery, rugs, weaving, knitting by hand machine, miscellaneous.

Since the war, the growing use in homes of knitting machines has made it necessary to include a class for articles made on such a machine.

Embroidery done with a patent needle or machine should be eliminated.

Caring for Exhibits.—All baked goods should be kept under glass. All dairy products must be kept on ice and definite arrangements should be made for replenishing the ice.

In the needlework department the exhibits should be covered with paper or otherwise protected during all sweeping and cleaning.

Make some arrangement, if articles which are in community exhibits have to be judged in open class also, so that there will be no delay for the judge and so the community booth will not look dismantled.

Two persons should always be on duty in the community booth so that if one is called away, the booth will have some one in charge to answer questions.

Judging.—This is often the keystone of the success of the fair, as the awards more than anything else influence public opinion and establish the standards of the exhibits. The selection of the judge or judges of the women's work is always rather a ticklish proposition for fair committees. If possible some outside and disinterested person should be chosen.

This person should moreover be known for her knowledge and success along the lines of work which she is to judge so that her awards cannot be questioned, and the management of the fair should stand by her in all her decisions.

Judging is really a process of elimination and comparison. A judge has in mind the food or article to be judged as it would

appear if perfect in all its details and when the articles to be judged are placed before her she immediately puts aside those which at first glance do not meet the requirements. After the first elimination the others may be examined more closely, and the process of comparison and elimination continued.

Public judging, especially of women's work, should be done if possible, and, if the judge is experienced and able to comment on the exhibits as she proceeds with the judging the exhibitors will be able to gain many points regarding their work.

"Good sportsmanship" is a very necessary thing among exhibitors at fairs. It's a fine thing to be a winner, but it's a better thing to be a good loser and to profit so by the loss that one can reverse the order at the next fair.

A suggestion which has worked out well in judging is to use small slips of paper with the name of the fair printed at the top and a space for the judge to sign at the bottom on which the judge writes any comments on the article, or suggestions for improvement. This slip is then fastened to the exhibit in an inconspicuous place.

Many fairs have as one of the rules for exhibitors "no article if not worthy shall receive a premium." Other fairs, however, have the ruling that if there is no competition an article may receive the first premium. This is a poor rule, for it may lower the standards of work exceedingly, and a judge who is really interested in her work will endeavor to raise the standards of the exhibits a little each year.

Scorecards have been featured very much for several years. These have been worked out in order to make sure that the judge "plays fair." It has been found, however, that a person experienced in judging can judge just as accurately without a score as with one, and the tendency in many scorecards is to dissect the rating into such infinitesimal parts that a great amount of time and bookkeeping is required for judging each article. Moreover, there seems no such thing as a uniform score. The writer has made a comparison of a number of scorecards for judging foods, pantry stores, canned goods, needlework and clothing, and found that anywhere from four to fourteen points were considered in the scores. The scores for judging breads were especially interesting. In analyzing scorecards, it would seem that the points might be combined or grouped somewhat as follows:

**Important points in judging foods, pantry stores and
canned goods:**

First, appearance, because the attractive appearance whets our appetite, and satisfies our natural desire for beauty.

Second, form or package.

Third, texture.

Fourth, flavor or taste.

Another point which might well be considered in connection with many of the foods is whether the finished product justifies the time, labor and cost of materials. This might be classed as "economic importance."

Important points to be considered in judging needlework and clothing are:

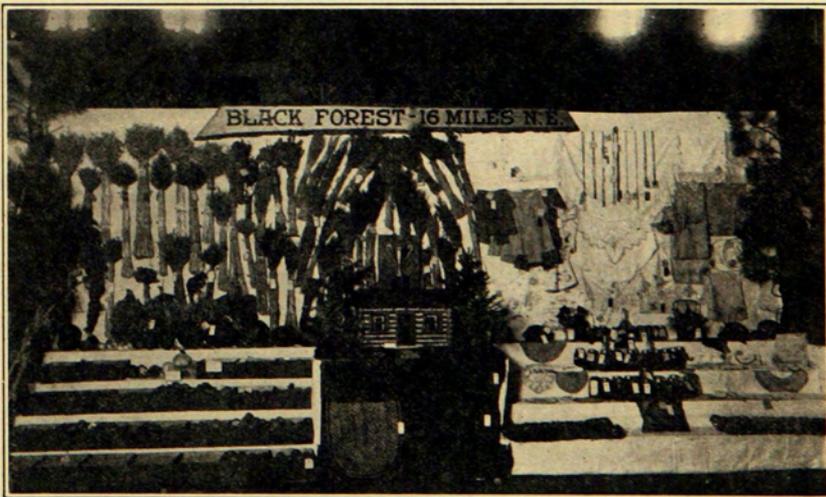
First, appearance, including color and design.

Second, suitability to use and of materials to such use and to each other.

Third, workmanship.

Fourth, economic or artistic importance. (That is: "Is it useful, beautiful or really worth while?")

Community Exhibits.—The judging of community exhibits probably offers the greatest hazard that a fair judge can encounter. The following points on which to base a score are suggested. The percentages to be allotted to the different points are not given here as it is suggested that the fair committees make these divisions themselves to suit the special requirements of the locality and the phases they wish emphasized.



A COMMUNITY EXHIBIT SHOWING A MODIFICATION OF THE "STEP ARRANGEMENT" OF SHELVES



A COMMUNITY EXHIBIT IN WHICH UNIFORM CONTAINERS FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLES AID IN THE DECORATIVE EFFECT

Points on which to base scores for Community Exhibits:

General appearance of exhibit

Color and decoration

Grouping and arrangement of exhibits

Variety and amount of exhibit material

Number of different classes

Total number of entries

Distribution between foods, clothing, needlework and household conveniences

Individual Exhibits

Useful or beautiful in clothing and needlework

General appearance of foods and pantry stores

Pleasing color combinations

High quality of workmanship shown in

Clothing and needlework

Canned goods and baked products

Home conveniences

Number and rating of ribbons won in open class

In judging the women's work in the community exhibits, the point should always be kept in mind: "Are the articles good exhibit material?"

Miscellaneous Suggestions.—Posters and charts explaining the work are of great value. These should be gotten up in a "catchy" manner to attract attention. Colored advertisements obtained from magazines will sometimes aid in making attractive posters.

If score cards are used it is an excellent thing to have a large score card placed next the prize winning product showing the division of the score.

If time permits it is an excellent thing for the judge to explain why articles received a prize.

Vases of flowers arranged for a center piece for the dining table, for a shelf, or for a side table would offer excellent exhibit material if cards explaining the purpose were placed near by.

The suggestion given on page 6 for each community to raise money for the purchase of suitable exhibit cases is one that is well worthy of consideration.

In counties where there is a county organization of women the earning of money for suitable exhibit cases and portable racks for the women's department at the county fair would be a splendid thing to do and would react in the raising of standards at the county fair.

One community that the writer is acquainted with is earning money in every conceivable way. With this they are buying bonds, and banking the interest, expecting as soon as their capital reaches a certain amount to start a community house. The auditorium of such a house would offer a splendid place for a community fair.

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