

---

# A Fair, Without the Fair, is No Fair at All: Women at the New England Agricultural Fair in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

by Linda J. Borish\*  
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Farm women and men, agricultural reformers, and male promoters all participated in the agricultural fairs of the nineteenth century, furnishing to farm life in New England, what it has long wanted—a season of recreation and healthful excitement.<sup>1</sup> These annual fall exhibitions, lasting three to four days, served as a social, educational, and recreational event for the farming community as part of the agricultural reform movement in the early and mid-nineteenth century. The farmers, with their wives and sons and daughters, participated in their great holiday, where they may see their calling truly exalted in the great show of folks and horses, roses and onions.<sup>2</sup> As the New England agricultural fairs evolved from their inception of the fair in the early nineteenth century as a practical farming community event into a more complex leisure and profit-oriented event in the mid-century, female participation changed, and such changes reveal the manifestation of gender in rural society.

New England agricultural societies initially sponsored local fairs in the early 1800s, a practice originated by gentleman farmer Elkanah Watson, known as the Father of the agricultural fair, who desired to spread agricultural improvement to ordinary farmers of Massachusetts. In 1807, after Watson exhibited two merino sheep, he recalled, Many farmers, and even women, were excited by curiosity to attend this first novel, and humble exhibition.<sup>3</sup> By the 1850s to the 1870s, country fairs flourished at the county, state, and regional level, in the golden age of the agricultural fair.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the fair meant different things to different people, and the experiences of rural daughters and wives at the fair became a crucial element of the success of the fair in mid-nineteenth-century New England. In the context of the fair, farm women participated as both spectators and competitors, generally men's prerogative within the gender conventions of farm life. Farm women's work and leisure experiences were integrated when women displayed their domestic products. Farm men, however, claimed power as judges at the fair in conferring

awards of excellence to farm women who displayed their bread and butter-making, home manufactures, and fine arts. Some women challenged male authority at the fair and competed in nontraditional contests such as female equestrianism. Such contests placed women in forms of competition that contrasted with the socially constructed images of feminine sporting behaviors. Juxtaposing the domestic arts competitions with the female athleticism that horse racing demands generated controversy about gender practices in rural New England.

As a metaphor for rural society, the agricultural fair revealed gender and power relations between farm men and women. The negotiations between men and women in the dynamics of the fair reflected the shifting male-female alliances in the gendered public arena. The agricultural fair as a contested terrain pitted some rural women against men when women desired to compete in events emphasizing physical skill rather than domestic skill. Rural women negotiated in the context of the fair to gain sway in both traditional and nontraditional competitions. Male agricultural reformers, like Solon Robinson, contributor to *American Agriculturist*, Henry French, editor of the *New England Farmer* and Mason C. Weld, editor and publisher of the *Connecticut Homestead* were typically from the middle and upper class of progressive farmers, while male promoters of the fair represented the planners, managers, and judges. Men held the power in the structure of the fair, and in this forum they could influence the nature of female participation in certain categories of competitions. Reform agriculturalists desired to improve farming by disseminating expert knowledge on farm crops and land use, and hoped to stem the tide of farm daughters and sons quitting the farmstead. As Caroline Barrett White remarked in her diary after viewing the farm and domestic products during the 1849 fair in Hanover, New Hampshire, the evening oration captured the rural reform sentiment. White recorded that Professor Brewster of Hanover gave an appeal to the Farmers of New Hampshire to make their profession an object of scientific investigation to give it that prominence among other professions which it deserves.<sup>1</sup>

Although gender lines remained in force in domestic exhibitions endorsed by agricultural improvers, male promoters of the fair and some women defied criticism and asserted the right of women to compete in forms of competition more threatening to the rural status quo. Some reformers saw the fair as an agent of agricultural betterment and hoped to entice spectators to view traditional farm products. Yet commercially motivated managers saw women as an agent of profit, and wittingly bucked convention to make money, even if it put them at odds with others. Rural New England women maintained conventional work-leisure patterns in competitions involving domestic productions, but there were also unconventional competitions that challenged traditional gendered activities in the rural community. At an 1848 county show, fair-goer Susan Fenimore Cooper marveled at the vibrant farm folks, cheese and carpets, butter and bedquilts. "Three or four thousand persons, men, women, and children, sometimes attend these fairs," and she discerned, "to-day the village is thought more crowded than it has been any time this year; neither the circus, nor menagerie, nor election, has collected so many people as the Fair."<sup>2</sup> The agricultural fair, vital to rural popular culture,

represented an occasion for rural women and men to reflect upon and define their roles as they participated in the mesh of cultural performances at the fair.

New England agricultural exhibitions served as family gatherings and as heterosocial festivals in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, at first, women's poor attendance at fairs troubled Elkanah Watson. At the 1813 Pittsfield, Massachusetts, fair, Watson described his effort to induce women to submit domestic manufactures for premiums: "The ladies of the county were invited to appear the 12th of January, 1813, with the fruits of their industry, and receive their premiums—the day arrived, and although the females exhibited fine articles, in no female was seen to claim the premiums . . . and I was extremely agitated, lest the experiment should fail." Watson, however, offered a plan to attract the females who dared to be the first to support a new project. To alleviate the ladies' apprehension, Watson explained his strategy:

I left the hall, and . . . prevailed on my good wife to accompany me to a private room in the house of exhibition. I then dispatched messengers to the ladies of the village. . . that she waited for them, at the Cloth Show; they poured forth—the farmers' wives, . . . the Hall was speedily filled with female spectators, and candidates for premiums.

To entice females to be fair-goers, in 1813 Watson added the "Agricultural Ball"; Watson commented on the benefits of the Agricultural Ball: "to promote domestic manufactures, by exciting emulation, and by inducing females to feel a pride in appearing decorated in the works of their own hands, on a public occasion."<sup>11</sup>

Rural women eventually attended the fairs more frequently and recorded their interest in the lively fair days. Elaine Goodale in her *Journal of a Farmer's Daughter* recalled the three-day New England fair: "Our County Fair, with its all of cheerful, wholesome interest and legitimate reward is with us the farmer's yearly holiday and merry-making." Goodale especially enjoyed the second day of the event, "the family turn-out, on which the wife and children are expected to have a good time and see all there is to be seen." She delighted in the array of products and in the people at the farm show, who personified the social spectrum of rural folks—married and single, lower and middle rank, old and young alike:

. . . from mammoth pumpkins to floral wonders, from farm wagons and implements to patchwork quilts, from snowy bread and biscuit to indifferent art—the universal study of character is best worth while. There are types here of every degree of markedness; the grubbing hard-featured fanner and the amateurish young dairyman elbow each other in the crowds; the round-eyed, red-cheeked country lass and the loud-mannered, overdressed village girl are jostled together; here is a comely, prosperous matron, and there a gaunt spinster with the worn sharpness, the aggressive ignorance of lone New England women.<sup>12</sup>

The public scene prompted Goodale to pronounce "the county fair and 'cattle-show' emphatically 'a good thing.'<sup>13</sup>

In private writings, too, rural women communicated their impressions about the tapestry of vibrant sights and articles at the agricultural fair. Caroline Barrett White kept a diary of New England life and recorded her excitement at the fair on October 17, 1849, writing, "I attended, yesterday, an Agricultural Fair, held at Claremont, N.H. A large crowd was present." She remarked that it was "the first affair of the kind ever held in the state." White highlighted the women's exhibitions of "many good specimens of needlework, and other articles the handiwork of the ladies, in the shape of rag carpets, hearth rugs, &c." and noted "the show of vegetable products, domestic animals, Agricultural implements, &c. was pronounced quite fair by competent judges." The fair-going experience, White reflected, included "the jostle of the crowd," but "for one spent the day happily."<sup>14</sup> In her diary of everyday life in Boylston, Massachusetts, farm wife Mary Avery White, whose son Francis Adams White married Caroline Barrett on June 25, 1851, recalled the social aspect of fair days. On October 8, 1846, "Curtis went a number in an omnibus to the Cattle Show. Smith went with Pamela Hastings to the Cattle Show returned toward night."<sup>15</sup>

Farm daughters as well as wives expressed interest in the agricultural exhibitions advertised in the rural press and broadsides (see Figure 1). The agricultural fair in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, appealed to farm daughter Sarah Plimpton. From the family's 150-acre farmstead in Sturbridge, Sarah wrote in a courtship letter to Lucius Benham of West Haven, Connecticut, on September 22, 1853, "Next Wednesday the agricultural fair will be held in this town, as it has been for several years about this season. Some few towns are united for this purpose." Sarah boasted, "and premiums are awarded where they are deserved just the same as those conducted on a more extensive scale." Sarah provided Lucius with an update on the fair proceedings in the letter of October 8, 1853. "It is thought our Agricultural fair," Sarah reported, "would have been something pretty grand if it had not been such a stormy day. As it was there was a good many people there, considerable number of things to be seen."<sup>16</sup> Farm daughter Bethia Scammell Wheeler in East Medway, Massachusetts, also received a letter about an upcoming fair. Bethia Wheeler's friend Mary Elisabeth Hayden anticipated the fall agricultural fair appearing in town in 1840. "Come make me a good long visit and we will go to Worcester. It will soon come Cattle Show." Mary asked Bethia, "Perhaps you would like to attend it?"<sup>17</sup>

Rural men in New England often observed the family presence at the agricultural fairs. Middle-rank farmer and fruit grower Josiah Goddard Stone of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, regularly included in his journal the fair-goers and events of the Worcester County Agricultural Fair. Stone commented on September 28, 1854, "Wife, Emory and Henry & myself all went to Cattle Show today & a great multitude of other people to see the parade of horses." Stone "took a look at the fruits and flowers in the Horticultural Hall, which were very fine." He proudly noted that he carried "40 varieties of fruits to Exhibition." The next year Stone attended the Worcester Cattle Show with his family and observed, "I think there were more show of people than of any thing else."<sup>18</sup> Henry Bullard, a middle-rank farmer living on the 150-acre Bullard farmstead in Holliston, Massachusetts,

**CATTLE SHOW,**  
**Exhibition of Manufactures,**  
 AND  
**PLOUGHING MATCH,**  
**AT WORCESTER, MASS...1833.**

The Trustees of the Worcester County Agricultural Society propose to their fellow citizens, a *Cattle Show, Ploughing Match, and Exhibition of Manufactures,* at Worcester, on *Wednesday, the 9th day of October next,* at 9 o'clock, A. M., and they have the pleasure of offering the following liberal

**PREMIUMS:**

**FOR STOCK**

**DOMESTIC AND HOUSEHOLD MANUFACTURES**

**FLOUGHING MATCH**

LEVI LINCOLN, President.

Printed by N. H. Colton & Co., App. Office, Worcester.

FIGURE 1. Agricultural Fair Broadside, Worcester County Agricultural Society, 1833. Old Sturbridge Village. Photo by Henry E. Peach.

paid sixty cents to attend the farmers' exhibition in September 1858. In his Cash Book, he recorded going to another fair: "Admittance to Hall and Fair ground at Milford 1.75." Bullard, who married farm daughter Bethia Scammell Wheeler on December 23, 1840, and had seven children, also revealed the family aspect of fair days. Bullard entered his payment for some of his sons and daughters to experience the fair activities; on September 28, 1870, he gave "Children Cash to

go to Cattle show 4.00.<sup>19</sup>

Henry Dana Ward, of the prominent Ward family of Shrewsbury, provided a vivid description of the Worcester Cattle Show in his travel journal. On October 8, 1823, Ward experienced the grand spectacle of the agricultural show:

Before daylight, I was aroused by the noise of the workmen bringing out the cattle for exhibition and fair at Worcester. After breakfast the family carriage whirled us along the busy highway six miles to the street. We reached the field for the ploughing match a little past nine o'clock AM, when the fences were already lined with spectators and the marshalls were swiftly riding to urge forward the business of the day.<sup>20</sup>

Ward noted the improvement over the first Worcester Cattle Show in 1819. The animals were assembled from a county which will suffer by a comparison with those of no other in America, he boasted, but now the exhibition is manifestly superior to what it was then. The various extraordinary productions of the earth enormous radishes, turnips, pumpkins, etc., and agricultural and domestic manufactures enhanced the agricultural show.<sup>21</sup>

Farm commentators celebrated the collection of agricultural items and farm folks on fair days in the press. A Homestead reporter celebrated the family holiday at the fair. For boys and girls, the fair wakes them up to the pleasures and profits of a farmer's life. And in the account of the 1850 Cattle Show at Sturbridge for the Massachusetts Ploughman a farmer highlighted that the streets were filled with a multitude of men, women, and children, representing all classes in community, with smiling and cheerful countenances eager to witness the opening scenes of the exhibition.<sup>23</sup> The pageantry of the fair, and woman's place in the fine spectacle, formed a hub of public attention, as when a cart from Durham [that] contained thirty-six young ladies, all dressed in white, representing thirty-six States by their respective badges and mottoes, was witnessed by Connecticut farmer E. H. Hyde. In short, a fair is a perfect success only when there are things to be seen and visitors to see them; both are essential, articulated the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture after attending several fairs (see Figure 2).<sup>24</sup>

Organizers of the fair wanted women to be a visible part of the event, whether with their families or with a co-ed group. These men wanted the women to be both spectators and competitors. Fair boosters wanted the fair sex to become a top attraction at fairs in the mid-nineteenth century. To attract women to fairs, however, agricultural society organizers believed they needed to offer physical arrangements conducive to the comfort of countrywomen who usually experienced leisure in the context of their work and domestic environment. Women seemingly influenced the upgrading of the physical space of the fairgrounds, as gender relations in this public venue called for appropriate amenities. For the Cattle Show and Fair of the Hartford County Agricultural Society, the Executive Committee voted during the October 1829 proceedings that four gentlemen be a committee to provide seats for the ladies. Fair managers believed proper seating and sanitation devices should be available for rural women on the fairgrounds in order to meet females' greater expectation of conveniences; the presence of the ladies' sitting room and toilet marquee and Commodious and Safe Seats where



FIGURE 2. Nineteenth-Century County Fair. Poster from the Bella C. Landauer Collection. Courtesy of the New York Historical Society, New York City.

the ladies will find a Saloon contiguous to them for their exclusive use enhanced the popularity and profitability of the fairs. Men thought female fair-goers required gender-appropriate construction of the physical space of the fair to ensure their patronage. Ironically, although women in the privacy of the home toiled indoors and out, receiving little recognition, in the public domain, women were thought to need special, refined treatment and consideration. Connecticut State Fair officials in the 1850s acknowledged the material culture thought to appeal to females, saying, "a separate saloon should be provided for the ladies, tastefully fitted up with everything necessary for their comfort." A reporter reflected on how the dry ground allowed ladies to visit with ease, any portion of the stock Fair administrators certainly wanted to prevent animal manure on the grounds from impeding farm women's movement! Indeed, "special accommodations for ladies" did entice them to come to the fairs and enjoy this form of recreation.<sup>25</sup>

Men envisioned women's participation as an essential ingredient for a successful agricultural fair. Fair promoters believed females enriched agricultural progress at the public shows by providing moral and familial support through their gender role. In the ideology of the fairs, women acted not in a separate sphere but in a widening male and female sphere where women could make the fairs better. Historian Nancy Cott has explained, "To equate the public with the woman's sphere is to posit that all women were behind the closed doors of home."<sup>26</sup> In fact, one farm enthusiast claimed in the *Homestead* in 1858, "that a fair, without the fair, is no fair at all."<sup>27</sup> Agriculturist Ralph Phelps declared to the Hartford County Agricultural Society in 1844, "Without the assistance, and especially without the presence, of the ladies, our fairs must languish and soon entirely fail.

The products of female industry and of female taste, he asserted, supply a place in our annual shows, which could not be otherwise supplied; and without these products, and without the presence of the ladies, our fairs would be as dull and insipid as the life of a bachelor.<sup>28</sup>

Men wanted women to attend the fairs and stressed the importance of the patronage of the ladies in gendered rhetoric. At the 1828 cattle show and exhibitions of the Worcester County Agricultural Society the speaker duly toasted the women's presence: "Our Fair Sisters . . . the best friends and most efficient patrons of the farmer; for they would have had men to be husbandmen."<sup>29</sup> The Committee of Arrangements for the 1857 Hartford County Agricultural Exhibition implored, "To the ladies especially, whose taste and skill have heretofore been displayed as the crowning excellence of these occasions, the Committee look with confidence for their generous and praiseworthy efforts."<sup>30</sup>

Yet, in Worcester County, women's sparse attendance at the Barre, Massachusetts, Cattle Show in October 1836 evoked specific comments in the press. Their poor attendance generated concern amongst rural reformers and may have influenced the scheduling of future fairs. "Domestic manufactured articles were scarceóbut three or four were presented for exhibition, the authors of which are entitled to great credit," stated the Barre Gazette "The scarcity of these articles may mainly be attributed, we presume, to the fact that it is Monday. With the ladies," the journalist reported, "the wash-tub always claims the priority over every cattle-show that occurs on that day."<sup>31</sup> Male organizers of the agricultural fair, who wanted women to augment the show as civilizers and educators and to render the fairs a refined leisure outing, needed to be mindful of women's domestic calendar.

Reformers and profit-oriented fair managers appealed to women to contribute to the health of the fairs by competing in exhibitions. Agricultural fairs highlighted female competition, a pivotal part of the fair-going leisure experience. Rural improvers wanted women to compete for prizes at the agricultural fair through the display of domestic skills in Public. These competitions integrated work and leisure, yet extended farm women's proficiency in the domestic sphere to the public sphere, where they could gain social prestige and recognition. While many farmers criticized and underappreciated farm women's labors at home, when women showed these labors for all to see in public, suddenly, her skills became acclaimed and she held some cultural power. A New England rural booster urged, "Fair ones of the dairy, and all ye tidy housewives, that give honor and reputation to Yankeedom, the time draws near for you to show your prowess; yes, to exhibit to the world how important to the farmer is the farmer's wife."<sup>32</sup> Rural reformers, realizing how little farmers praised wives for their housekeeping talents, advocated the competition of women at the fair as the main way for women to gain esteem.

Women competitors at the fair, like their male counterparts, wanted to excel in their domestic work. Yet winning a prize for its own sake was generally not the primary goal. The woman who triumphed over her competitors experienced a brief but pleasant rise in position among the farming sisterhood and fair visitors.

The woman gained prestige as the best farm woman, felt proud of herself and acquired some material reward in her farming life. Interestingly, these women's competitions contrasted sharply with the de-emphasis and disparagement of it elsewhere. In the gender dynamics of this competition, only competition of a certain kind would be fitting for females in the antebellum era.<sup>33</sup> This included noncontroversial, female-oriented domestic productions. In these competitions, females displayed their domestic abilities. One farmer aptly termed this stunning show of household manufactures, dairy products, and fine arts, "ladies' fixings."<sup>34</sup> Henry Dana Ward offered his own positive impression of some women's farm productions at the Worcester Cattle Show. "I visited the hall of deposit for the various articles of manufacture: broadcloths, cassimeres, carpeting, cotton goods, cutlery, household manufactures, and leather. Bonnets, hats, shoes, socks, and a thousand fancy articles," he commended, "increased the exhibition." Ward was also pleased to note that in an adjacent room were the boxes and firkins of butter, cheeses piled like dollars upon each other.<sup>35</sup> In some areas, women competed with each other, but they also cooperatively set up attractive public displays. The pleasing exhibit of household items demonstrated the gender-based capabilities of farm females and the mutual effort of all women.

The fair sex and domestic competition went hand in hand at the agricultural fair. The male reform ideology of the fairs induced farm women to strive with other farm women, rather than against them. A woman showing her household arts gives evidence of the wives and daughters of Connecticut to compete with the sisterhood successfully anywhere," expressed a male proponent of the fairs in 1858.<sup>36</sup> To the "Agricultural Sisterhood of Connecticut," a male correspondent portrayed the thrill of competing on fair days:

Fair hands are to fashion the balls of butter, and make the bread, and execute, for us, the fancy work, that we hope will grace our next display. . . . There is nothing more to be commended than good housewifery . . . The young lady . . . who made the butter that took the first Premium . . . wears a coronet today that would not ill become a queen. She has met the wives and daughters of Connecticut in peaceful competition and conquered.<sup>37</sup>

Such a call for "peaceful competition," agriculturalists anticipated, motivated farm females to participate at the fair.

Farm daughters, aware of the esteem awarded the victorious female exhibitor, participated alongside their mother. The Homestead informed readers in 1860 of the power of women competitors who navigated the public space with the fruits of their domestic labor. "It is all well enough to make the best butter in the country," the rural enthusiast declared, "but it is nothing to having the world know it. It relieves the drudgery of farm work very much to know that all our neighbors take a kindly interest in our labors." He heralded, "Not a good dairy woman in the land but stands an inch taller in her shoes when she takes the five-dollar premium on the best butter; not a damsel of sweet sixteen who takes the premium on bread but wears her bonnet more jauntily for the rest of the year."<sup>38</sup> Regardless of marital or class status in rural culture, wives and girls contending

for laurels on fair days received public recognition for their food ways, quilts, and other household articles.

Connecticut farm wife Laura Lyman recalled her participation in the competitions at agricultural fairs. She submitted her butter, Boston brown bread, and a parlor rug to pursue the very natural housewifely ambition to carry off some of the prizes which have been offered. If I fail, Lyman explained, it will not be for want of effort on my part, but because some more successful competitor has more knowledge, skill, and experience than I possess.<sup>39</sup>

Farm women entering their products for the fair vied for premiums and prizes. The best female exhibitor might be awarded small amounts of money, ornamental items like silver plates and medals, or a decorative household utensil. Yet the prize itself proved not to be the primary motivation for the competitors. The glory bestowed upon the victorious female competitor by her peers in the farming community actually seemed to far outweigh any concerns about the requisite labors in the quest for the prize. Competitor Laura Lyman relished the fair as her butter, bread, and rug each drew a prize. The energy put into manufacturing these items in no way irked her. Rather, in her own words, "My own labor in its manufacture I never count; it was a recreation from the routine of household duties." She received a beautiful silver cup for the butter, a silver fruit knife for the bread, and a silver dessert spoon for the rug. Proudly reflecting on her prizes, Lyman evaluated their worth not in material terms. "They shine on the table as I write, and much as I prize them for their intrinsic value, the honor of which they are the pledge, I rate of far more worth."<sup>40</sup> The reward structure of the fair competition bestowed self-esteem and admiration rather than great material rewards.

No matter what the wares exhibited by "fair hands," men judging and awarding premiums conveyed the power of gender in the public forum of rural society. Generally, male judges were middle- and upper-rank prominent members of the agricultural society, and they publicly conferred prestige on women's abilities honed in the domestic sphere. While women were encouraged to compete with one another, the right to bestow honors on women competitors resided in the male domain. The aesthetic criteria implicit in the judging process worked to allow "community values to emerge through action as well as through expressed standards."<sup>41</sup> In competition at the fair, women entered this domain, but not on equal terms. Men crossed gender lines to stand in judgment of women's housekeeping skills. At the fair, like at home, men either criticized or praised women's farm work. Men's and women's leisure zones overlapped, just as their work zones did, but their different levels of power were evident. Women could compete at the fair, but could not be decision-makers and hold public power in awarding prizes for their own gender and their domestic capabilities.

Dairy products, of course, fell within the farm woman's proper realm. The Homestead zealously urged Connecticut farm women to show excellent dairy products, exhorting "Dairy women! Who takes the state society's \$15.00 premium?"<sup>42</sup> Plenty of butter awaited male judges for evaluation. At the 1859 Connecticut State Fair, the all-male "Committee on Butter" inspected forty

different samples. Ralph W. Robinson, delegate to the Fairs in New Haven County, Connecticut, for 1868, seemed satisfied with the butter he examined. "A taste of the butter soon convinced me that the farmers' wives in that vicinity ~~own~~ their business but not above it," he commented, noting improvement in the dairy exhibition.<sup>43</sup>

Laura Lyman claimed victory for the best butter at an agricultural fair. "My butter was pronounced by the judges as at once more beautiful in appearance, and excellent in quality, than any other at the Fair, and it was beautiful." Her prize-winning butter consisted of "four magnificent golden pineapples in a setting of green leaves; they looked like fruitage from the trees of Eden!"<sup>44</sup> Other skilled butter makers fell short of victory in the eyes of the judges.

At home or in public, farm men expected women to produce excellent food products. For example, Cassandra Edson Clarke wrote her mother, Polly, in Yarmouth, Massachusetts, about her own baking troubles in pursuit of good bread, and the criticism she endured from her husband John. In a letter on February 22, 1855, Clarke revealed, "I guess I'll not go into the pantry to tell you about the piles of poor bread there," and continued, "as for bread I am almost discouraged," but she would "try it again tonight." Yet her husband judged her bread and found it lacking in quality, generating gender tension in the household. Clarke informed her mother that her husband "says he knows more about cooking than I do and if it was not for the name of it, he would take hold and make some bread," which spurred her to state, "I would like to see him try."<sup>45</sup> In the agricultural press some farmers wrote about farm women failing to make perfect bread. A critique of women's bread-making by a farmer of Lowell, Massachusetts, was printed by editor William Buckminster in the 1840s.<sup>46</sup> This farmer charged, "It is high time that our good matrons had more knowledge ~~care~~ in the bread making art," and admonished farm women to provide "good bread, not paste-like, unhealthy stuff, which will be like a log on a man's stomach." The editor agreed and urged farm families "to be sure to have good bread," prompting women, "You never tire of bread and butter when they are well made."<sup>46</sup>

Men admonished women for poor bread and butter in the farm household, and the fairs represented a public forum of doing the same thing. Three male judges of the Bread Committee wielded their power at the Connecticut State Agricultural Society exhibition in 1855. These men announced to the "fair competitors" that "had their recipes been more full and explicit, they would have given better satisfaction." Judges expected excellent bread to be exhibited by farm women, but they found fault with the samples women submitted.<sup>47</sup> Judges also scrutinized butter presented by farm women. Evaluating butter at one Hartford County Fair, the Committee found "some mistakes in the good Ladies who presented the butter." One dairymaid failed to include sufficient salt, while another butter-maker heard the judges deem her butter "somewhat rancid." The Committee stated, "We trust we shall inflict no pain on the good house wives, who presented the butter for our inspection."<sup>48</sup>

However, falling short of expectations in competition proved to be no small matter for a farm woman, nor for her husband. "Where is the man who doubts

the ability of his wife to make the best butter and cheese, yet he finds that three gentleman, acting as judges, pronounce another article superior,<sup>49</sup> contended a farm journalist. The farmer's wife will quietly adopt the rules given by the successful competitor,<sup>49</sup> and still seek the laurels next year. Fathers also prodded their farm daughters to win the premiums as a way to demonstrate the farmer's superior farm products. For example, James Franklin Allen, a New England merchant-farmer, read the announcement in a farm periodical of the premium for the finest bread to be awarded at the agricultural fair. Farmer Allen enthusiastically declared that his daughter Etta should contest it with her neighbors, from the flour made of his own wheat. To further stimulate her ambition, Allen offered an additional premium of ten dollars, if she would win the silver cup from all the competitors. If Etta produced the best loaf of bread in the public venue of the agricultural fair, she would indirectly confer accolades on her father's farming methods. I feel quite sure that I shall win the prize. Etta determined, the contest being an important endeavor to father and daughter alike in the farm family.<sup>50</sup>

In the household manufactures department, women eagerly contended for acclaim, creating a popular and prominent exhibition. Here women presented rugs and carpets, blankets, pillows, quilts, needlework, stockings, skirts, hats, flannels, linen, and other domestic articles. Male members of the "Committee on Domestic Manufactures" praised the handiwork of "comfort, elegance, and ornament," that gave ample and continued evidence of the industry, thrift, and good taste, of the Ladies. To the women exhibitors, the Committee expressed, your acknowledgments for their liberal and powerful assistance and influence in adding to the beauty and interest of these exhibitions. Phillip Ripley, chairman of the committee examining the household goods at the Hartford County Annual Fair, awarded a silver medal to Roxina A. Ely, Bloomfield, best Wool Yarn and Linen Thread, and diplomas to Eunice Cameron, Marlborough, 2 Table Cloths; Lucy Ann Derrin, Avon, Hall Carpet; Mrs. Asa Farwell, Hartford, best Bed Quilt; Catharine Wells, Newington, Linen Diaper Towels; Mrs. E. Brainard, Southington, Hearth Rug; as well as to other female exhibitors. At another fair the committee recommended a premium to E. Chapin of East Hartford of \$3 dolls. for a counterpane.<sup>52</sup>

Fair organizers, visitors, and competitors all agreed on the merits of this attractive display of women's domestic objects. Fair-goers anticipated, Here come the group of fair damsels, crowding into the hall, to see the various handiwork.<sup>53</sup> Delegate B. B. Plumb for the Housatonic Fair, at New Milford, Connecticut, announced, The ladies' industrial department was well remembered, but to mention each particular article with name of exhibitor would be doing more than is required of me. Indeed, the ladies, as usual, made a beautiful display of the various and useful and ornamental results of their industry, and did themselves credit, an 1856 Connecticut State Agricultural Society official stated; these women added greatly to the attractions of the time.<sup>54</sup>

The local press and farm press covering the cattle show and exhibition highlighted the outstanding domestic wares presented by farm women. The public

notice of women's achievements in household manufactures elicited special consideration by female readers. So when a male reporter failed to provide an accurate account of a woman's prize-winning entry in the domestic department for the Hartford Courant he incurred chiding from the women:

Our reporter made a mistake in saying that the quilt and pincushion by Miss Adelaide Moore, of Bloomfield, were crocheted; instead it should have been knitted. We beg pardon of those ladies we offended in so saying, and whom we yesterday overheard scolding us for so doing.<sup>55</sup>

A woman displaying superior handiwork deserved her proper public credit by both journalists and judges.

Judges rarely found fault with the domestic creations made by women, contrary to the food products. Men seemed to have a greater stake in the quality of butter than in the quality of domestic manufactures since men knew good butter would sell better. Some agriculturists, however, hoping to see continued patronage of the fairs by females, thought females might exercise a larger role in fair proceedings. Higher premiums for household wares and placing women on committees to judge and categorize domestic objects would give women greater autonomy in the public leisure arena. Yet the judging of food ought to differ from the judging of housewares, advised proponents of women at the fair. The 1859 Connecticut State Fair included a "Committee of Ladies" for household manufactures and some female judges helped inspect "Needle, Shell, Wax and Fancy Work." But in the "Flour and Butter" category, no women were admitted to the ranks of judges.<sup>56</sup>

Women's contributions to the agricultural fair in dairying, bread-making, household manufactures, and horticulture evoked high praise. Yet a woman needed to please the male who judged her creations, just as male farmers judged women's work at home, holding them accountable for any faults. The fairs replicated existing power relationships, which made men the only possible arbiters of quality.

Horse racing was also popular at agricultural fairs. In the early and mid-nineteenth century, rural New Englanders debated the place of horse racing, a prominent feature at the agricultural fair. Horse exhibitions attracted visitors to the fairgrounds.<sup>57</sup> Henry Dana Ward commented extensively on the evils of horse racing at the Massachusetts Agricultural Show and Fair at Brighton on October 15 and 16, 1823. While at the ploughing match, "it was amply paid in the gratification experienced in beholding the contest," which was not the case for Ward at the horse races. He wrote, "As I regarded the orderly & interested multitudes that deeply lined the field, I reflected on the different spirit inculcated by this match & a horse race." Ward detailed the problems generated by the spectacle of the horse races:

At the race there is a violent running to & fro of men boasting before the race of their favorite horses, a general disposition to bet which is frequently indulged to extravagance, an unfeeling & dangerous exercise of the horses, & after the contest a vainglorious triumph of the winners & a demand of the wager.<sup>58</sup>

The betting on the horses deeply distressed Ward, and the rowdy behavior of the spectators alarmed him. In every part of the entertainment the crowd exhibit highly wrought passions & obstreperously bawdy actions. He decided, I have no quarrel with the horse race, but these faults all will join me in condemning. Compared to this rowdy scene, the ploughing match absorbs the attention without creating an intoxicating interest, Ward asserted, and it gives no license to passion or excess. It is a healthful nourishment to the social spirit and moral feelings of the community.<sup>59</sup> Still, horse races drew large crowds despite the moral outrage uttered by some agriculturists. At the 1855 Worcester County Cattle Show, farmer Josiah Goddard Stone observed, There was a sort of horse show & trial of speed that captured his attention before he then went to Horticultural Hall to see fine fruits & vegetables.<sup>60</sup> Fair managers recognized that horse races lured large crowds, often at the expense of more mundane exhibitions.<sup>61</sup>

Many fair purists, however, argued that horse races tainted the farmers' festival. In the agricultural press, there was divided opinion on The Horse Question at the fair. One farmer explained how the horse track fostered all the usual evils—intemperance, gambling, and immorality.<sup>62</sup> Agriculturists preaching improvement in exhibitions of farm life clashed with profit-seeking fair promoters capitalizing on the popularity of horse races. One critic of horse racing pronounced that the horse races revealed that agricultural societies would exchange their good character for the money which they received in their coffers. The large gatherings that attended these sports, however, detracted from other exhibitions. In the words of the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture, These remarks are designed to apply to all so called agricultural fairs, where fast horses are made the especial attraction. Too often the crowd neglect the cattle but gather at the day of the horse show.<sup>63</sup> After viewing the New London County Fair in 1868, rural proponent B. B. Plumb expressed his sentiments: The horse department, as usual, was well represented, some fine teams and fast nags, and to witness the trial of their speed assembled many fast men and women also, concluding that here, as elsewhere, the horse was the leading attraction of the Fair.<sup>64</sup>

Introduced in the early 1850s, female equestrianism, a novel nondomestic competition, featured women competing against each other, rather than collaborating to exhibit their domestic abilities.<sup>65</sup> In the races, a woman's skill on the horse determined victory or defeat; victory was not conferred by male judges. Horse racing, as opposed to the butter competition, represented genuine competition and also put the female body somewhat on display. Because of these factors, horse racing was considered outside women's proper realm. When women seemed to digress from their role as moral guardians and took part in competitions of female equestrianism, the rural order appeared threatened in the eyes of progressive farm advisers. Controversial competitions such as female equestrianism involved gender identity issues and raised deep concerns regarding commercial aspects of the agricultural fair.

Initially, many rural New England fair-goers eagerly watched female equestrianism. In 1854, the Hartford County Agricultural Society announced the first trial of horsemanship by the ladies.<sup>66</sup> A Hartford Courant reporter

observed that the four female riders acquitted themselves handsomely at the county fair. He described the riding skills of women both married and single in the event:

Miss Gilson rode a trotting horse, a thing seldom done by ladies, and her performance elicited the admiration of all. Miss Burr managed matters very easily and quietly. had perfect control of her horse, and rode very gracefully. Mrs. Bullock had the misfortune to first ride a very hard bitten horse, which proved too much for her when he became excited. Her second horse was a high spirited animal, and on both she showed that she was no novice in riding she managed her horses with great skill. Miss Miner rode exceedingly well she sat firmly in her saddle and made a very graceful appearance.<sup>67</sup>

The ladies equestrian display drew the admiration of thousands of spectators who were assembled to witness the novel exhibition. Yet the local newspaper reported on the menace of the energetic racing fans being in proximity to the female riders: the crowding of the spectators interfered somewhat with the performance.<sup>68</sup>

Defenders of female equestrianism lauded this popular exhibition. A New England Farmer contributor explained in 1857 that we may safely leave the subject with the ladies themselves. If they think it proper, we gentlemen ought not to be modest above measure, but let them have their way. He urged, a little more equestrianism among the ladies of New England would be a most excellent idea, and a little healthy encouragement is what is very much needed. Women, not men, should be the decision-makers on the propriety of female horse racers at the agricultural fair.<sup>69</sup>

Some rural ladies took up the charge. At the 1856 Hartford County Fair, The Homestead reported, The riding by the ladies was very handsome. Eight ladies entered as competitors for the prizes; the Hartford County Agricultural Society printed in the premiums list for the fair that in the category Best Saddle Horses, rode by Ladies, the first premium of \$5 was won by Mrs. Grant, Manchester.<sup>70</sup> Some agricultural society leaders believed female riders on the race course increased patronage of the fair. The reform-minded agriculturalists mediated their promotion of legitimate agricultural interests with the need to attract a large crowd; farm folks drawn to the fair to see women horse racers could then be induced to see the exhibitions, and thus be influenced to seek to emulate the farm improvements they witnessed at the fair. One farm writer said of women riders, It is well for the country that they can overcome their scruples, and sacrifice their feelings to the public good, and he determined, for thus only can the great cause of agriculture be made to prosper. As a key attraction at the fair, The ladies will draw a greater crowd, and so help the society more than all the vegetables and animals you could get together.... We hope that our enterprising lasses will appear in squadrons at every fair,<sup>71</sup> one farm advocate declared, disregarding the reproaches of critics of female equestrianism.

But the scene of lively female riders at the fair unleashed forceful opposition by the mid-1850s. The criticism grew out of a general discussion of the morality

of horse racing of any kind, but farm journalists and reformers specifically questioned the appropriateness of the female gender racing horses in public competition at the agricultural fair.<sup>72</sup> In the 1857 New England Farmer one rural opponent 'Almost Seventy' years of age declared, 'No modest female can be quite satisfied with herself, after she has been making a display on a race-course, in the presence of a motley group of men, coarse in speech and behaviour.' He judged, 'The delicacy of their nature forbids this.'<sup>73</sup>

Other rural New Englanders joined the chorus condemning women on the race course. Horse-jockeys, horse-fanciers, fast horses and 'fast women' have been the most conspicuous objects on most of the 'fair grounds,' the present season,' vented one critic. He compared the parade of female equestrians to the parade of domestic animals:

Our daughters as well as our horses, girls of tender age, girls of larger growth, and even wives, as well as fillies, pacers and breeding mares, are brought on to the course for exhibitions, and gazed at, and criticized by thousands, and praised and flattered, and caressed, for the same reasons as the animals which they drive, beauty of skin, and form and limb, and grace of action.<sup>74</sup>

This opponent wondered, 'Mr. Editor, what will be the effect of such an exhibition, and of the preparatory training for it, upon female character? Will not these females soon answer the description of a 'fast woman'?' he lamented. Farm advice-givers deemed that women riding for health and exercise was suitable for their gender, yet they clearly drew the line at women competing for premiums in the public space of fairgrounds as 'Female Jockeys.'<sup>75</sup> In American Agriculturist, Connecticut columnist Timothy Bunker voiced his disgust at women horse racing. 'The business is just putting up a woman's modesty at auction,' he alleged, 'because the thing is unwomanly that it draws such a crowd of low, indecent people to see it.' In sum, sober-minded ruralists believed female equestrianism cheapened the farmers' festival.<sup>76</sup>

In claiming female horse racing undermined the legitimate object of the agricultural show, a farmer expressed his disgust at the performance of female equestrians. 'The ladies would do better to be at home, making bread or butter, or still better, be able to bring a specimen of those articles to the fair, that they might compete for the prizes offered,' he asserted, 'rather than to show themselves mounted on a fast horse to run a race that the crowd 'that pays' may have an opportunity to gratify strange curiosity that seems to exist in the breasts of the Yankees.' This rural New Englander asked fair-goers, 'Are you willing to have forty or fifty dollars paid for the best specimen of 'horsewomanship' when your wife or daughter received but three or four dollars as the highest premium given for the best butter, cheese or bread?' Any person preferring 'horse-racing to bread and butter, or fruit,' he resolved, 'let him have his fill and live on that as long as he can, for he does not deserve any of the bread or the butter.'<sup>77</sup>

Agricultural reformers blamed profit-seeking fair managers for hyping female equestrianism to the farm community and held male promoters responsible for subverting the moral character of the fair with their boosterism of women horse

racers. Questioning the monetary schemes of unscrupulous promoters of the fair, a farm columnist asserted, "whether the fact that a lady sits gracefully and reins and manages her horse skillfully and without fear, will in any way promote the essential interests of agriculture can be easily decided." He saw no imaginable benefit direct or remote, to the riders themselves or to the community, and suggested, "cannot other attractions be offered than such as are particularly appropriate to the circus?"<sup>78</sup> Some critics used satire to highlight the absurdity and unnaturalness of women's racing, blaming the men who operated the fairs and capitalized on the female gender showing an unbecoming "masculine" demeanor. Perhaps greedy fair managers might consider showing a donkey race, "certain to be a very comical and ludicrous sport." The Agriculturalist provided a sketch of another inane race when a Connecticut fair introduced an "ox-race" as one of the fair's features.<sup>79</sup> Agricultural officials at the 1859 Hartford County Fair considered the exercises on the fair grounds to be "degraded, debased, and the lowest taste of the community pandered to, by foot race," noting, "Next year we may look for greased pigs and poies, etc."<sup>80</sup>

Such offensive demonstrations at the agricultural fair prompted some agricultural society administrators to enact reform measures. Connecticut agricultural officials approved "An Act for the Protection of Agricultural and Horticultural Fairs" including the provision in 1868 that stated, "It shall be unlawful for any person to exhibit or show any natural or artificial curiosity for any price or gain, or to set up to let or use for profit, any swing, revolving swing, flying horses or whirligigs within one mile of the fair ground of any Agricultural Society in the state."<sup>81</sup> The specter of rural wives and daughters competing with vim and verve in the sport of female equestrianism, while such spirit was deemed acceptable by rural men in female bread and butter contests, alarmed men concerned about the female image in sporting competitions. One farmer proposed for the fair yet another reform: "And as to premiums, I could suggest that the first prize for female horsemanship should be a likely young farmer." Surely a huge crowd of spectators would watch a horse race for "the premium husband."<sup>82</sup>

Reformers objected to the public exhibition of women's athleticism to entertain fair-goers and produce financial rewards for managers. Because female equestrianism provided a very different sort of competition in which male judges had a minor role and little influence on the outcome of the events, female horse racers actually undermined male authority and challenged the traditional role of the female gender.

New England advocates of farm improvement expected women to augment the rural social world on fair days. Farm advice-givers keenly urged farm women and girls to compete in suitable exhibitions at the agricultural fair. Meshing work and leisure, these contests included the gender-based categories of dairy products and household manufactures. In these exhibitions, women cooperated with one another as they competed and male judges had control over awarding premiums. Yet some women raced horses for prizes and spurned traditional gender behavior in the contested terrain of the public fair, negotiating the constraints on their role in rural society. Fair managers wanted to profit from female equestrianism,

but male rural reformers discerned that female horse racers challenged their authority and greatly jeopardized the moral aims of the agricultural fair. The agricultural fair was an extension of women's work and gender relations on the farm; with the controversial exception of horse racing, the men functioned as the arbiters of women's participation at the fair.

---

\*Research for this paper was funded by the Old Sturbridge Village Research Fellowship, Sturbridge, Massachusetts, Summer 1993. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Theresa Rini Percy and the staff of the Research Library at Old Sturbridge Village for their suggestions for this project. I would like to thank Caroline Sloat for her help with materials at the American Antiquarian Society. The University Research Fellowship, Western Michigan University, also provided support for this project. I thank Hasia Diner for her useful comments on an earlier version of this paper, and Stephen Hardy for his intellectual guidance on this manuscript.

I thank the anonymous readers for the *Journal of Sport History* who provided important comments and insightful suggestions in revising the manuscript.

1. "An Encouraging Review," *The Homestead* (September 18, 1856): 817.
2. "Agricultural Fairs," *The Homestead* 4 (October 6, 1859): 874-875; "The Fairs Once More," *The Homestead* 1 (September 11, 1856): 802-803; see also "Agricultural Fairs," *The Homestead* 4 (August 25, 1859): 779.
3. Wayne Caldwell Neely, *The Agricultural Fair* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., reprint, 1967), 21; Elkanah Watson, quoted in Neely, *The Agricultural Fair* 61; for a discussion of Watson's role at the early fairs see Mark A. Mastromarino, "Elkanah Watson and Early Agricultural Fairs, 1790-1860," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 7 (Summer 1989): 105-118. By 1811, the Berkshire Agricultural Society incorporated, designed to cater to the interests of common farmers.
4. Kenyon L. Butterfield, "Farmers' Social Organizations," in Liberty Bailey, ed., *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, vol. IV: Farm and Community (New York: MacMillan Co., 1909): 289-297. Butterfield wrote that in 1857, only New York's 97 agricultural societies surpassed New England's 95 agricultural societies, with most societies becoming prominent in the East. The agricultural fair served as the dominant form of association among farmers. For selected works on the growth of agricultural fairs see Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*, Mark A. Mastromarino, "Elkanah Watson and Early Agricultural Fairs, 1790-1860"; Karal Ann Marling, *Blue Ribbon: A Social and Pictorial History of the Minnesota State Fair* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1990); Chris A. Rasmussen, "State Fair: Culture and Agriculture in Iowa, 1854-1941," (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1992); Donald B. Marti, "To Improve the Soil and the Mind: Agricultural Societies, Journals, and Schools in the Northeastern United States, 1791-1860" (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979); Marti, *Historical Directory of American Agricultural Fairs* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986); Leslie Prosterman, *Ordinary Life, Festival Days: Aesthetics in the Midwestern County Fair* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 42-54; Caroline Hope Roston, "To Make a Better Spirit: Community and History at the Hill Town Fairs of Western Massachusetts," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1993).
5. Eleanor Metheny, *Connotations of Movement in Sport and Dance: A Collection of Speeches about Sport and Dance as Significant Forms of Human Behavior* (Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown, 1965), explores the feminine images in sport, see pp. 48-49, 52.
6. For a discussion of gender and relationships of power, see Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (December 1986): 1053-1075; see also Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988): 9-39.

7. Diary of Caroline Barrett White, October 17, 1849, Manuscript Collection, American Antiquarian Society, microfilm, Reel No. 1, Vol 1.
8. Susan Fenimore Cooper *Rural Hours*, by A Lady (New York: George P. Putnam, 1851), 311-313 for her description of a county fair.
9. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 10, 12, 23 discusses culture, meanings, and social interactions in public. On cultural performance, see John J. MacAloon, "Introduction: Cultural Performances, Culture Theory," in John J. MacAloon, ed., *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), 1; John J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 269-271; Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1888* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) provides an analysis of American women in cities and urban public space.
10. Elkanah Watson *History of the Rise, Progress, and Existing State of the Berkshire Agricultural Society*, in Massachusetts (Albany, NY, 1819), 20-21.
11. Mastromarino, "Elkanah Watson and Early Agricultural Fairs, 1790-1860," 109-110; Watson quoted in Mastromarino, 110.
12. Elaine Goodale, *Journal of A Farmer's Daughter* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), 130-134.
13. Goodale, *Journal of A Farmer's Daughter*, 34.
14. Diary of Caroline Barrett White, October 17, 1849, Manuscript Collection, American Antiquarian Society, microfilm, Reel No. 1, Vol 1.
15. Diary of Mary Avery White, October 8, 1846, Boylston, Massachusetts, White Family Papers, Old Sturbridge Village, Research Library (hereafter OSVRL).
16. Sarah L. Plimpton to Lucius Benham, September 22, 1853, and October 8, 1853, Plimpton-Benham Courtship Correspondence, OSVRL.
17. Mary Elisabeth Hayden to Bethia Scammell Wheeler, September 25, 1840, Bullard Family Papers, Correspondence, OSVRL.
18. Josiah Goddard Stone Journal, September 27, 1854, and September 28, 1855, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, OSVRL.
19. Henry Bullard Cash Books, September 1858, September 1865, September 1870, Bullard Family Papers, OSVRL.
20. Henry Dana Ward, "A Traveller's Journal of a Tour from Athens, Ohio, to Boston, Mass., By Way of the Lakes and the Clinton Canal, Returning by an Entirely Different Route, Upwards of 400 Miles of it Being Parallel with the Seacoast, Distant from 60 to 100 Miles," October 8, 1823, Octavo Volume 12, Ward Family Papers, Manuscript Collection, American Antiquarian Society (hereafter AAS). For information on the Ward family farm in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, see Andrew H. Baker and Holly V. Izard, "New England Farmers and the Marketplace, 1780-1865: A Case Study," *Agricultural History* 65 (Summer 1991): 29-52.
21. Henry Dana Ward, "A Traveller's Journal," October 8, 1823, Octavo Volume 12, Ward Family Papers, Manuscript Collection, AAS. For a discussion of cattle shows in Worcester County in the early nineteenth century, see Andrew H. Baker, "The Municipal Cattle Shows of Worcester County," paper on file, 1989, OSVRL.
22. Henry Dana Ward, "A Traveller's Journal," October 8, 1823, Octavo Volume 12, Ward Family Papers, Manuscript Collection, AAS.
23. "The Agricultural Exhibition," *American Agriculturist* 5 (September 1856): 271; "Agricultural Fairs," *The Homestead* 4 (August 25, 1859): 779; A Farmer, "Cattle Show at Sturbridge," *Massachusetts Ploughman* 10 (October 26, 1850).
24. Second Annual Report of the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture., Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1868): 188, 196.

25. Circular, Hartford County Agricultural Society, September 11, 1828, Stowe-Day Foundation, Kingsbury Collection, Hartford, Connecticut, *The State Fair* *The Homestead* 4 (October 14, 1858): 64; *How to Make Fairs Popular and Profitable*, *The Homestead* 4 (July 28, 1859): 714; Circular for Connecticut State Fair, 1857, *The Homestead* 4 (September 22, 1859): 853; Transactions of the Connecticut State Agricultural Society, for the Year 1856, with the Reports of the County Societies for the Same Year, Hartford, CT Case, Tiffany & Company, 1857): 19; *The State Fair. At Hartford, October 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th*, Hartford Courant, October 6, 1862; Linda Jane Borish, *The Lass of the Farm: Health, Domestic Roles, and the Culture of Farm Women in Hartford County, Connecticut, 1820-1870*, (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1990).
26. Nancy F. Cott, *On Men's History and Women's History*, in Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen *Meanings for Manhook Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990): 207; see Nancy Grey Osterud's discussion of *No Separate Spheres* in her book *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).
27. W., *Agriculture and Female Equestrians*, *The Homestead* 4 (September 23, 1858): 16.
28. Ralph R. Phelps, *Address Delivered Before the Hartford County Agricultural Society, October 5, 1844*, Transactions of the Hartford County Agricultural Society for 1843 and 1844 (Hartford, CT: Elihu Geer, 1845): 70.
29. *The Farmer's Holiday*, Massachusetts Spy, October 15, 1828, 2, OSVRL.
30. *Agricultural Exhibition and Fair of the Hartford Co. Agricultural Society*, Circular, *The Homestead* 3 (October 1, 1857): 40. This appeal to the ladies appeared in other circulars for the fairs of the Society.
31. *The Cattle Show*, October 7, 1836, Barre Gazette OSVRL.
32. Robert B. Thomas, *Farmer's Calendar*, May 1851, *The Farmer's Calendar* (Boston: Jenks, Palmer, & Company, 1850).
33. For a discussion of the cultural meaning of women's competition in the nineteenth century see, J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, eds, *From "Fair Sex" to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Era* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1987); Linda J. Borish, *The Robust Woman and the Muscular Christian: Catharine Beecher, Thomas Higginson, and Their Vision of American Society, Health, and Physical Activities*, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 4 (September 1987): 139-154.
34. Chase Boughton to his cousin William Wright, October 14, 1849, New York Historical Society. Wright used this term *iladies fixings* in his description of women's domestic productions at an agricultural fair.
35. Henry Dana Ward, *A Traveller's Journal*, October 8, 1823, Octavo Volume 12, Ward Family Papers, Manuscript Collection, AAS.
36. Henry A. Dyer, Transactions of the Connecticut State Agricultural Society, for the Year 1858, with Report of the Annual Meeting for 1857, Hartford, CT: Williams & Wiley, 1859): 18.
37. H. L. Read, *The County Fairs next Fall*, *The Homestead* 1 (May 1, 1856): 506.
38. *Shall We Have Fairs This Fall?* *The Homestead* 6 (July 19, 1860): 49.
39. Laura E. Lyman, *Leaves from the Diary of a Young Housekeeper* No. X., October 12th, *American Agriculturist* 26 (October 1867): 371.
40. Lyman, *Leaves from the Diary of a Young Housekeeper* No. X., October 14th and October 20th, 371.
41. Leslie Prosterman, *Ordinary Life, Festival Days: Aesthetics in the Midwestern County Fair* 17, 106
42. *Butter Making*, *The Homestead* 1 (June 26, 1856): 632; see Sally McMurry *Transforming Rural Life: Dairying Families and Agricultural Change, 1820-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) for data about the place of dairying in rural domestic economy, and Linda J. Borish, *Another Domestic Beast of Burden: New England Farm*

- Women's Work and Well-Being in the 19th Century, *Journal of American Culture* 8 (Fall 1995): 83-100 for information about women's work in dairies.
43. Transactions of the Connecticut State Agricultural Society for the Year 1859, with Report of the Annual Meeting, for 1860 (Hartford, CT: Williams, Wiley, and Turner, 1860): 100, Third Annual Report of the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture, 1860 (Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood, & Brainard, 1869): 230-231; see Sally McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life: Dairying Families and Agricultural Change, 1820-1880* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) for insight on various dairying techniques and products made by farm women.
  44. Lyman, "Leaves from the Diary of a Young Housekeeper" No. X., October 20th, 371.
  45. Cassandra Edson Clarke, Detroit, February 22, 1855, to Polly Edson, Yarmouth, MA, Eliphalet Edson Family Papers, OSVRL.
  46. H. M., "Hired Men On a Farm," *Massachusetts Ploughman* 5 (March 21, 1846); Editor's response.
  47. Transactions of the Connecticut State Agricultural Society, for the Year 1855, with the Reports of the County Societies for the Same Year (Hartford, CT: Case, Tiffany and Company, 1856): 99-100.
  48. Transactions of the Hartford County Agricultural Society, for 1843 and 1844 (Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood, and Company, 1858): 161-162.
  49. "Agricultural Fairs," 875.
  50. Mrs. Madeline Leslie, "The Bread and Butter Machine," *New England Farmer* new series, 14 (September 1862): 429.
  51. Transactions of the Hartford County Agricultural Society 1843 and 1844 (Hartford, CT: Elihu Geer, 1845): 104-107.
  52. Item in collection on Hartford County Agricultural Society, n.d., Stowe-Day Foundation, Kingsbury Collection, Hartford, Conn.
  53. Robert B. Thomas, "The Anniversary. The Farmer's Calendar," *October 1856*, *Farmer's Almanac* (Boston: Jenks, Hickling, & Swan, 1851).
  54. Second Annual Report of the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture., 1860 (Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood, and Company, 1867): 187; Transactions of the Connecticut State Agricultural Society, for the Year 1856, 20.
  55. "The State Fair. At Hartford, October 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th," *Hartford Courant* October 10, 1862.
  56. "Connecticut State Fair," *The Homestead* 4 (October 20, 1859): 917; "Premiums for Indoor Manufacturers. Good Examples," *American Agriculturist* 20 (October 1861): 310.
  57. John Rickard Betts, "Agricultural Fairs and the Rise of Harness Racing," *Agricultural History* 27 (1953): 71-75; Neely, *The Agricultural Fair* 93, 190-192; Borish, "The Lass of the Farm: Health, Domestic Roles and the Culture of Farm Women in Hartford County, Connecticut, 1820-1870," 543-545; Roston, "To Make a Better Spirit: Community and History at the Hill Town Fairs of Western Massachusetts," 509-510, 527-528, 530-531.
  58. Henry Dana Ward, "A Traveller's Journal," October 16, 1823, Octavo Volume 12, Ward Family Papers, Manuscript Collection, AAS.
  59. Henry Dana Ward, "A Traveller's Journal," October 16, 1823, Octavo Volume 12, Ward Family Papers, Manuscript Collection, AAS.
  60. Josiah Goddard Stone Journal, September 27, 1855, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, OSVRL.
  61. Neely, *The Agricultural Fair* 93, 190-192.
  62. George E. Brackett, *Farm Talk: A Series of Articles in the Colloquial Style, Illustrating Various Farm Topics* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1868): 41; the phrase "The Horse Question" appeared in the agricultural press in several articles. See Albert L. Demaree's chapter, "The

- Agricultural Fair, pp. 217-219, for the views of the agricultural press on horse racing in *The Agricultural Press, 1819-1860* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, reprint, 1974).
63. *Second Annual Report of the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture*, 1867, 200.
  64. *Third Annual Report of the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture*. 1868/69
  65. *Hartford County Agricultural Society. The Fair. Riding By Ladies*, *Hartford Courant*, October 6, 1854.
  66. *Hartford County Agricultural Society. The Fair. Riding By Ladies*, *Hartford Courant*, October 6, 1854; *Hartford County Agricultural Society's Yesterday. Riding By Ladies*, *Hartford Courant* October 7, 1854.
  67. *Hartford County Agricultural Society's Yesterday. Riding By Ladies*, *Hartford Courant*, October 7, 1854.
  68. *Transactions of the Connecticut State Agricultural Society, for the Year 1854*, *Hartford County Agricultural Society's Yesterday. Riding By Ladies*, *Hartford Courant*, October 7, 1854.
  69. J. S. S., *Agricultural Fairs*, *New England Farmer*, new series, 9 (August 1857): 351.
  70. *Exhibition of the Hartford County Agricultural Society's The Homestead* 2 (October 9, 1856): 44; *Transactions of the Connecticut State Agricultural Society, for the Year 1850*, 195.
  71. W., *Agriculture and Female Equestrians*, *The Homestead* 4 (September 23, 1858): 16-17.
  72. Demaree, *The American Agricultural Press, 1819-1860*, 220-222.
  73. *Almost Seventy*, *The Horse Question*, *New England Farmer*, new series, 9 (February 1857): 67.
  74. S., *Cattle Shows*, *New England Farmer*, new series, 9 (January 1857): 14-15.
  75. *Female Jockeys*, *The Homestead* 1 (November 15, 1855): 142; on physical recreation and suitable sporting activities for farm women see Linda J. Borish, *Farm Females, Fitness, and the Ideology of Physical Health in Antebellum New England*, *Agricultural History* 64 (Summer 1990): 17-30, and Borish, *Do Not Neglect Exercise Nor Recreation: Rural New Englanders, Sport and Health Concerns*, *Colby Quarterly* 32 (March 1996): 28-32.
  76. Timothy Bunker, *Tim Bunker on Women Folks and Horse Racing*, *American Agriculturist* 17 (November 1858): 323-333, *The Farmer's Festival Perverted*, *American Agriculturist* 17 (December 1858): 359.
  77. Middlesex, *Horse Racing at Cattle Shows*, *New England Farmer*, new series, 8 (March 1856): 133.
  78. *Agricultural Fairs*, *The Homestead* 1 (August 21, 1856): 755. This article was excerpted from a piece by a correspondent of the *Rural New Yorker* on the subject of female equestrianism. The *Homestead* editors endorsed the correspondent's viewpoint.
  79. *Horse Races at Fairs*, *American Agriculturist* 17 (September 1858): 272; *A Modern Agricultural Fair*, *American Agriculturist* 22 (November 1863): 329.
  80. *The Hartford County Fair*, *The Homestead* 4 (October 6, 1859): 880.
  81. *Third Annual Report of the Secretary of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture*. 1868/69
  82. *Agriculture and Female Equestrians*, 16.