

Inventory of the

**Wheatland Plow Match Association**  
Wheatland, Illinois

Records

In the

Regional History Center

**RC 110**

## INTRODUCTION

George Fry, President, donated the Wheatland Plow Match Association Records to the Regional History Center on September 25, 1980.

Property rights in the collection belong to the Regional History Center; literary rights are granted to the public. There are no restrictions on access to the collection.

Linear feet of shelf space: 1.5  
Number of containers: 2 + 1 volume  
Northern Illinois Regional History Center  
Collection 110

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The records in this collection partially document the history of the Wheatland Plow Match Association from 1898-1978. Complete materials from the first fifty-five years at the organization's existence, 1877-1921, are missing. Nevertheless, the surviving records, particularly the meeting minutes, provide information on the Association's discussions about each match program, the possibility of changing plow rules, decisions on the amount of prize money to be awarded, and nominations and elections of officers. The Association's correspondence reveals those agencies contacted to provide annual match advertisements. Programs, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, and photographs depict match activities, the contests and their winners, and the Ladies' Fair.

The Wheatland Plow Match Association, one of the oldest outdoor farming event organizers in the United States, furnished exciting and competitive recreational activities for thousands of people. These records provide a unique opportunity for research on this common form of rural entertainment.

The Regional History Center holds two other collections documenting outdoor recreational associations: Kishwaukee Audubon Society Records (RC 107) and Princeton Game and Fish Club Records (RC 113). Researchers also should note that Box 1, Folders 1-3 contain brief histories of the Wheatland Plow Match Association.

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

Over two hundred people attended the first Wheatland Plow Match held on September 22, 1877. Judged on the straightness and uniform depth of their furrows and the number of weeds left uncovered, the plowing contestants competed for seven cash prizes totaling forty-four dollars. Shortly after the match, the Wheatland Plow Match Association organized and elected James Patterson president.

Over the years, the annual plowing match became an event comparable to a county fair. The Association continually added new events to the basic plowing competition including a colt show (1881), baseball game (1886), Women's Fair for exhibiting cooking and sewing (1887), and a chicken show (1894). Carnival booths, airplane rides, and farm equipment displays also appeared. The increase in attractions pushed attendance as high as 18,000 in 1921 and lured people from states as far away as Arizona.

Although an outdoor event, the Association officials cancelled only one Wheatland Plow Match for inclement weather (1961). Other incidents, such as World War I and II, the Chicago World's Fair (1893), and Patterson's absence (1884), forced seven additional cancellations. In 1976, the board members voted to make the centennial plow match the last year for the event. Presently, the Wheatland Plow Match Association continues to meet in an attempt to determine the disposition of the Association's land.

In 1990 the original Wheatland Plowing Match Association and Farmer's Committee of the Naperville river walk project combined their efforts, funds, and knowledge to form a new organization that would be dedicated to preserving the area's rural heritage, it would be called the "New" Wheatland Plowing Match Association. This new organization covers Wheatland, DuPage, Lisle, Oswego, Plainfield, and Naperville.

#### SUBJECT TRACINGS

Agriculture--United States---Societies, etc--Farm Life Societies  
Draft Horses  
Fairs  
Wheatland Plow Match Association  
Will County (Ill.)

COLLECTION INVENTORY

<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	
1	1	Souvenir History Programs, 1898, 1927, 1952	
	2	Historical Sketch, 1973-1975	
	3	Centennial Program, 1976	
	4-9	Minutes, (1922-1978)	
	10	Minutes, n.d.	
	11-12	Treasurer's Account Books, (1925-1929, 1939-1961)	
	13	Correspondence, (1959-1976)	
	14	Building Use Contracts, (1973-1978)	
	2	1	Land Leases, (1963-1976)
		2	Plowing Rules, 1973, n.d.
3		Applications for Temporary Red Cross Stations, (1958-1974)	
4-8		Programs, (1959-1975)	
9		Mailing List, 1959	
10		Match Materials (Score Cards, Winners Lists), 1976	
11		Newspaper Clippings, (1921-1976)	
12-14		Scrapbook Pages, (1914?-1963)	
15-16		Photographs, (69), n.d.	
17		Photographs from binder, (11), (1877-1930's)	
18	Handwriting/Penmanship Competition Winners, 1930-1951		
19	"Rural Heritage News," Spring 2012		
Oversize	1 volume	Scrapbook, (1973-1977)	
Oversize Drawer 16, Folder 1		Advertising Posters, 1958-1978 (9) [permanent loan to donor]	