

Bloomfield's Clay Barnett Proposed National Event

Oct. 1956

Davis county has an unusual and special interest in the National Plowing Contest and Conservation Expositions that have been held each year since the first held in 1946. This year's contest and exposition will be held on the 10,000 acre Hershey Farms near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

The reason for the special interest we in Davis county have in these events of national importance, is that our own soil conservation expert, Clay Barnett, is the individual proposing the national event.

The national plowing matches were a natural outgrowth of the Corn Belt matches started at Mitchellville in 1939. The matches were continued with the Boone match in 1940, and the Albia contest in 1941, but were discontinued during the World War Two years.

In 1945, the plowing matches were resumed, with the scene of the event being near Grimes. The first contour plowing event scheduled for the plowing matches was held at the Grimes meet. None of the matches held prior to 1946 were truly national in character. They originated as state events, and then became regional.

Here is the way the August, 1956, issue of the Palimpsest magazine describes the history of the establishment of the National Plowing Contest and Conservation Exposition.

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"Realizing the need for widespread emphasis on contouring and other soil conserving practices, Clay Barnett (at that time Marion County district conservationist, who now holds a like position for Davis county) and Herb Plambeck, WHO Farm Director, war correspondent, and member of the agricultural committee, met soon after the 1945 regional contest to discuss the matter. They agreed a meeting of Iowa farm and conservation leaders should be held to discuss the possibilities of a nationwide demonstration or contest."

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The Palimpsest then relates that a meeting was held in Des Moines early in 1946, and lists a number of the prominent individuals and firms that participated. The Palimpsest article continues as follows:

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"Highlight of the meeting was Clay Barnett's proposal that a farm 'face lifting' be held in connection with the proposed National Plowing Match. Great enthusiasm was expressed for this idea, and a decision was made to hold a National Soil Conservation Day in connection with the plowing contest. Marion county, widely known for its soil conservation leadership was awarded the first 'National.'"

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The article in the Palimpsest then tells the story of the first national meet. Walter Brown, of Knoxville, was made chairman for the event. Brown had previously served as county agent for Davis county. The conservation events were directed by Clay Barnett.

Thus was born one of the really great national events of the United States. A native Davis countyan, Clay Barnett, is primarily responsible for the events that have been held each year since 1946, and will be celebrated near Harrisburg this coming August.