By Keith and Cheryl Chamberlain

Editors Note: As the National Western Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show approaches its 100th birthday, we offer this first in a series of four articles reciting the colorful history of the show.

The year was 1906. Theodore Roosevelt was in the White House, there were 45 states in the Union, Colorado was getting ready to celebrate its thirtieth birthday and sirloin was ten cents a pound. On the outskirts of Denver, a growing town with a population of 200,000, stockmen from around the West gathered to show their animals, buy and sell breeding stock and encourage a meatpacking center to rival those in Kansas City and Chicago. From this beginning, the National Western Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show was born. The grand champion steer that first year was a Shorthorn that tipped the scales at 1,150 pounds and befitting its status, fetched an eye-popping 33 cents a pound.

The West Needs A Stock Show

In the early years of the 20th century, western stock growers faced a problem. They lacked a large market center in the

A circus big-top is home to the 1906 and 1907 stock shows.
West to receive their animals and the cost of shipping to eastern markets cut into already lean profits. Though there was a small meat packing industry in Denver, it was a poor cousin to its larger rivals in Chicago and Kansas City. There was also the feeling among western stockmen that they weren’t getting fair prices for their cattle, sheep and hogs. Livestock raising in the West was a tougher proposition than in the more humid East where concentrated corn and grain feeds were used to fatten livestock. The solution would be improved breeds that could thrive in this more arid region and a meat packing center in the West to compete with the big eastern packers.

Beginning in the 1890s, there had been efforts to get a regular livestock convention established in Denver, but what was needed was an ongoing stock show that met every year. In July of 1905, Elias Ammons, Fred Johnson and G.W. Ballantine met to talk over ideas for an annual stock show. Ammons was a Douglas County rancher, Colorado State Senator, and newly elected president of the Colorado Cattle and Horse Growers Association. Johnson was the president of the Daily Record Stockman, a livestock industry newspaper, and G. W. Ballantine was associated with the Denver Union Stockyards. Ammons proposed that they organize a show to be held in conjunction with his association’s convention in Denver coming up in January, 1906. January was a practical choice because, coming after the fall harvest and before spring calving, it was a convenient time for stock growers. Denver businessmen liked the idea of a January show because the post-Christmas period was the slowest time of the year for sales. What better fix for the mid-winter doldrums than a convention that would draw large numbers of visitors and get Denverites out of their homes to see the stock show.

When the stockmen’s convention and the stock show were set to open in January 1906, an editorial in the Rocky Mountain News declared that “No convention to be held here this year will exceed in importance the gathering of this week. It should not be necessary for stock raisers to send their cattle, sheep and hogs to the Missouri River and Chicago in order to find a favorable market. This city will not be satisfied until it is the livestock center of the West and all the related industries are firmly established here.”

The National Western Comes To Town
On opening day of the “Western Livestock Show”, Monday, January 29, 1906, Denver basked under clear skies and enjoyed a balmy afternoon temperature of 63 degrees. Northeast of downtown at the Denver Union Stockyards, a circus big-top had been erected and the city was abuzz with excitement. The Rocky Mountain News reported that throngs of stockmen were filling local hotels. City leaders urged Denverites to attend the show and lend their support for what was hoped would become an annual affair. To encourage them, “Denver Day at the Stock Show” was declared for Wednesday the 31st. The Rocky Mountain News reported that “The city has declared a holiday, banks and other private enterprises will close their doors and the schools will not be in session.” The paper urged citizens to attend and attend they did—by the thousands. There was a bit of rain that day, but admission was free and Denver’s citizens swarmed over the show grounds, tramping through the mud, milling about the stockyard pens, gawking at blueblooded cattle, sheep and hogs and filling the big tent to watch the judging.

What they found at the show were the best cattle the West had to offer. There were four breeds present: Herefords, Aberdeen-Angus, Shorthorns and Gal-loways. Livestock for the first show totaled 336 entries. The two horse breeds came from the ends of the spectrum: draft horses and ponies. The Colorado Agricultural College in Fort Collins (now Colorado State University) sent a trainload of 600 students, who brought their own livestock and pretty much cleaned up in the judging, leading to a rule disqualifying the school from competing in subsequent shows.

When the six-day show closed on February 3, and things in Denver returned to normal, there was little doubt as to the success of the event. The first show was reported to be a real eye-opener for eastern meat packers, putting them and the rest of the nation on notice that Denver’s goal of making itself a major livestock market and agricultural center was serious. Plans were immediately underway for a repeat the next year.

In 1907, work crews had no sooner finished erecting the monster tent than a Front Range gale flattened it. The crews went back to work the next morning, repairing huge rips and pitching the tent again in time for the show’s opening. When the second
show opened on January 21, it was the "Western National Stock Show," a name that would be used again in 1908 and then altered to the current "National Western Stock Show" in 1909. It was an even bigger and more festive event than the first. An admission of 25 cents was charged and folks streamed in by streetcar, horse-drawn rigs and even a few automobiles. The latter drew many a horse laugh as they passed by the stables.

The pens of the Denver Union Stockyards were crammed with cattle and the bustling show grounds might have reminded us of the modern terminal at DIA. The big-top was in use again but was now joined by a host of other tents. Exhibits of farm and ranch machinery filled five large ones. Among the latest equipment on display was a "traction engine," a harbinger of things to come. In smaller tents, stock show guests could find hot Coney Island chowder and roasted peanuts. A large wooden barn had been added for the comfort of the equine contestants.

As the centerpiece on the show grounds, the big-top, awash with color and commotion, presented quite a spectacle. The Rocky Mountain News boasted that the big show tent was "decorated more lavishly, mayhaps, than were the arenas of ancient Rome." There had been no arrangement for heating it at the 1906 show, but to ward off January's chill in 1907, "big coke braziers, each holding 200 pounds of good, enlivening heat, kept the visitors in the big tent warm and comfortable."

Entering the tent, visitors found green tanbark spread on the floor, lending a grassy outdoor atmosphere that was complemented by the aroma of hay, bedding and livestock feed. Brightly colored flags and bunting draped the stands, and the sounds of cattle and horses filled the tent as darkness fell and stars began to glimmer the big-top glowed with golden arc lights. The deep voiced announcer boomed judging results through a megaphone and a brass band struck up the tune "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." As the thunder of drumming hooves and the jingle of harness trappings announced the first class of horses entering the arena, the crowd rose to its feet in a roar of approval.

Attendance at those first shows pleased the organizers, fulfilling their predictions about the popularity and usefulness of such a show but also sending them scrambling for a solution to the crowding problem. For the 1908 show they built a wooden stadium topped with the canvas roof of the huge tent that had housed the show in its first two years, but this was to be only a temporary solution. That summer ground was broken for the construction of a large, permanent stadium and it was ready for the opening of the fourth stock show on January 18, 1909. The National Amphitheater, now known as the Stadium Arena, was built with the latest technology of the times and has faithfully served the National Western ever since.

When the big-top was replaced by the National Amphitheater none of the festive atmosphere was lost. Inside brick walls and under a modern glass and steel roof the building was festooned with red and green banners, crescent-shaped American flags, and brightened by electric lights. Green tanbark covered the floor and the building was still filled with brass music.

The tramway company ran special streetcars every two minutes to carry visitors from Denver Union Station over rail lines that passed through the heart of the show grounds. By 1912, to speed access for the growing number of visitors, a specially surfaced roadway led from downtown to the show grounds with electric lights illuminating the way. On arrival motorists found ample parking space for their machines alongside horse drawn carriages. In another sign of advancing technology, guests found newly installed telephone booths inside.

Livestock: The Working Heart Of The Show

Following the 1906 show, articles of incorporation were drawn up for the Western Stock Show Association, Elias
Ammons was elected president and an executive committee was formed. The show’s organizers succeeded in both their goals of improving livestock breeds and fostering the growth of a livestock market in the region. Within a few years western cattle breeds had been improved to the point that eastern buyers were now in Denver each January to buy the “hardy, disease-proof strains” from the Rocky Mountains to take home for the improvement of their own herds. In 1913, representatives of the Chicago packing houses arrived by special train and bidding on carloads of breeding stock brought in $1 million in a single record breaking day for western livestock. Stockmen received $2.6 million for their animals at the show.

The year 1910 was a turning point for the show. Until this time only entries from the West (defined as the area west of the 99th Meridian) were permitted and “feeder cattle” meant grass-fed cattle, not animals fattened on grain and corn. But after the 1909 show organizers voted that entries from all over the U.S. would henceforth be accepted and the stock show became a truly national event.

In 1914, with Elias Ammons (now Governor of Colorado) serving as auctioneer for one of the sales, the cattle grossed $6 million. At the sale the Hermosa Ranch of Colorado Springs sold ten head of yearling and two-year-old Hereford bulls at an average of $648 a head, a record price anywhere for a group of such size. Lambs brought about 10 cents a pound. The Rocky Mountain News boasted that these top prices were “proof of the superiority of the meat producing ranches and farms in this state.”

The National Western suffered its first major setback when the 1915 cattle show was canceled due to an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. A gathering of animals from around the region seemed hardly the prudent thing in the face of the contagion. The horse show and poultry exhibitions went ahead as planned, but overall turnout was scant in comparison with prior years.

By 1929 almost three and a half million head of cattle, sheep and hogs, with a total value of sixty-five million dollars, were received annually at Denver’s expanding stockyards and packing houses, showing conclusively that the organizers of the National Western had realized their goal of making Denver a major livestock market center. At that year’s show the Denver Post reported keen interest in cattle judging among the crowds. In addition to prize cattle, visitors could look over herds of Poland-China and Duroc-Jersey hogs, 300 “splendid specimens” in the rabbit show, and more than 1,500 feathered hopefuls in the poultry show with colorful chicken breeds like Golden Orpingtons, White Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds and Black Jerseys. Homing pigeons also put in an appearance. One pair, valued at $1,000, were directly descended from birds that had carried messages in World War I, and a racing pigeon flew from Trinidad to Denver in 5 hours and 48 minutes on the eve of the show, a feat to be envied by today’s rush hour motorist creeping through Colorado Springs and the southern Denver suburbs on I-25.

In keeping with the goal of improving ranching and farming in the West, shows in the 1920s featured exhibits by Wyoming, New Mexico and Colorado universities on diversified farming, farm record keeping, model poultry houses, new seed varieties and improved dairy breeds. By this time, packers and consumers were demanding beef with lower fat content, and as a result of selective breeding they were getting it. They could prepare that leaner beef in a kitchen remodeled along the lines of a model farm kitchen exhibited at the show.

Livestock prices through the first quarter century of the stock show followed a generally upward trend. The World War I years of 1915 through 1918 saw a spike in prices paid at the National Western for champion and feeder livestock. Colorado cattlemen donated heifer calves for a special sale at the 1919 “Victory Stock Show” and raised over $43,000 for the Red Cross. Higher prices were to be a short-lived boon to American stockgrowers, however. When the guns in Europe fell silent and producers on the Continent got their feet back under them, prices for beef and other agricultural commodities tumbled in the States. They would not regain the levels of 1920 until the eve of the Depression. In 1930, the grand champion steer, an Angus this time, sold for $1.60 a pound and champion carload feeder steers, Herefords again, brought 18 cents a pound.

Colorado-raised steers ruled the feeder champion classes to the near exclusion of other states throughout the period. While Herefords tended to dominate into the mid-1920s, Angus steers won grand champion honors in four of the last five years of the decade. It was a short-lived dominance, however. The familiar red and white Hereford would virtually rule the class for four decades beginning in 1930. Purebred Herefords, Angus and Shorthorns were the backbone of the industry in those
Folks at the turn of the 20th Century loved horses as much as we do at the turn of the 21st, and in 1907 an enduring and popular feature was added to the January show. The Denver Gentlemen’s Driving and Riding Club sponsored the National Western’s first horse show that year. Its evening performances filled the big tent and later the National Amphitheater. Cattle judging took place during the day and a parade of prize-winning stock opened the evening horse shows. Seats for the horse shows went for 25 cents and a private eight-seat box could be had for $25 for the entire week.

The horse shows were an instant hit with the public. They filled the amphitheater to bursting and on one notorious evening in 1909 the show was oversold. The crowd was so tightly packed that some who fainted from the heat were carried along in the human tide. The following day the Denver Republican observed "The show management would like to convey to the public the suggestion there probably will not be such intolerable congestion tonight. Those who were there last night would like to convey to management the suggestion that greater congestion is not within the bounds of possibility."

For high steppers in Denver society, attendance on Society Night at the Horse Show became a must. Attendees were a who’s who of the Mile High City and "Everyone that’s anyone in Denver-town" was there, leading to headlines like "Society in a Gay Whirl This Week for the Horse Show."

The coverage of Society Night by the local papers was as lavish as the high fashion worn by the women in attendance. This from the Rocky Mountain News on January 22, 1913: "It was so-ci-e-tee night and Denver’s most exclusive matrons bowed in homage to blooded quadrupedal rule. The boxes presented an array of bright colors, gay costumes, and waving plumage. Silk hats were in such an abundance that you might easily have imagined you were attending a queen’s reception at the gardens of a royal palace. The Queen of Sheba herself would have looked like a last-year’s fashion plate had she been among those present." The buntinged boxes holding Denver’s upper crust were "almost dazzling with their gleam of white arms and necks, sparkle of jewels and rainbow hues." Women turned out in lush gowns of satín, velvet, chiffon and lace, in colors from yellow, gold, forest green and marine blue to the ever-sophisticated black. They accessorized with furs and ermine-sophisticated scarves, ropes of pearls, orchid corsages and fabulous plumed hats festooned with breasts of swan and silver ornaments.

Newspaper descriptions of the fashions worn to the horse shows by Denver’s first ladies through these first 25 years is a chronicle of changing tastes. By the end of the Roaring Twenties, women’s attire ran to sleek, low-cut gowns, often worn without hats, while gentlemen turned out in tuxedos and silk hats. One thing that didn’t change, however, was high society’s love of the National Western. In 1929 the Denver Post declared that Denver socialites supported the show "with all the enthusiasm that marks the opening of the metropolitan opera season in New York."

And then there was Loula Long. This champion horsewoman, daughter of a Kansas City lumber magnate, dazzled audiences and judges at National Western horse shows. She declared a fondness for Denver audiences and they loved her back. Her entrance into the arena on one January evening brought the audience to its feet with a chorus of cheers and applause that lasted five minutes. Each subsequent entrance, and there were many, was greeted with another outburst. It’s no wonder she appreciated her reception in the Mile High City. And well might the crowds have cheered her. On the evening in question she captured blue ribbons in four of the five classes she entered. By show’s end, her stalls were decorated with 13 blue ribbons.

For a short time there was a keen rivalry between Loula Long and Adolphus Busch III. She won 17 first place ribbons at the 1912 show, while the St. Louis brewing heir managed only three. Busch did not return for the show the next year, having sold his horses and retired from competition.

Miss Long traveled in style. After the two-day journey from Kansas City by private rail car, she took up residence in a suite of apartments at the Brown Palace Hotel and granted audience to admiring reporters attired in a "most charming red Japanese kimono" with her golden tresses falling in "two long plaits from beneath a becoming boudoir cap." For the show, she brought along 15 horses, two Boston terriers and a French bulldog, a spectacular wardrobe that kept typewriters at the local dailies clacking throughout the week and hats beyond counting. She delighted her female fans by appearing in a different hat for every event.

The newspaper descriptions of Denver’s society matrons,
glowing as they were, couldn’t hold a candle to the florid prose lavished on Miss Long’s wardrobe. According to the Rocky Mountain News on January 22, 1913, "She might just as well have popped out of the latest Parisian band-box, so chic, so dashing and so piquant was the ‘tout ensemble.’ Her tailored suit was of ‘clingy’ white Bengaline silk, cut a la mode, a splash of deep pink sweet peas made a flaming corsage, and her huge black velvet hat, turned saucily up on one side, billowed in soft white feathers of paradise that sheltered a shell-pink rose."

Denver crowds believed in audience participation, cheering the judges’ selections when they agreed, hooting and booing when they didn’t. A judge who failed to award Loula Long the blue ribbon in the four-in-hand class was loudly hissed by the audience. Guidelines for audience etiquette, admonishing spectators against such displays, became a regular feature of horse show programs soon after.

But the horse shows provided plenty to watch besides high fashion. Audiences from all walks of society enjoyed seeing skilled horsemen and women put their blooded steeds through their paces in events like fine harness horses driven to four-wheeled vehicles, five-gaited Colorado horses, ladies saddle horses, high steppers, trotters and roadsters, Shetland harness ponies, gaited saddle stallions and working cow horses.

In addition to the competitive classes, the horse shows also offered many other entertainments. At one show, the breathless crowd was treated to a performance by an electric-lighted, horse-drawn rig. In the darkened arena the horse, vehicle and driver were gradually lit up in an outline of red, white and blue incandescent globes. Then the 40-piece band of the 9th U.S. Cavalry played "Yankee Doodle" while the lighted rig circled the arena. Horsemen of the 9th Cavalry, a unit of African-American soldiers, also performed riding exhibitions to awe the crowd. The Denver Republican, describing the performance, said "Two troopers ride abreast, and when their mounts reach a two-foot hurdle, one soldier leaps to the ground and then vaults back onto his horse. They ride bareback and adapt the trick to turning clear round, and finally jumping to a standing posture on their horses' backs. They also introduce the regulation army pyramid, where 10 troopers ride on each others shoulders on four horses." That same evening, Lieutenant Nicholson of the 9th Cavalry thrilled the crowd with a record high jump on his horse McCaskey. On his third attempt, he tossed his hat into the crowd, spurred his jumper to full speed and sailed over the five-foot three-inch barrier to set an arena record.

Polo matches were regular features in these early years of the horse show, with periods played between judged classes. One year it was the Reds and Whites versus the Blues—all Denver society gentlemen, while in another year a team from the Denver Country Club squared off against members of the 13th U.S. Cavalry.

Build It And They Will Come

Thanks to the popularity of the horse shows, the National Western secured a steady stream of revenue, monies badly needed as the association struggled to build facilities to keep up with increasing entries and crowds. When it added the rodeo in 1931, the stock show would hit upon a combination of events to guarantee large crowds and gate receipts through the remainder of the century.

In the early days the stockyards were the heart of the show. Owned by the Denver Union Stock Yard Company, most entries were stalled there and it was the location of the carload auctions that formed the working core of the show. The stockyards company kept the show afloat in the early years with frequent transfusions of cash for operations and facilities. Organizers of the show struggled to increase the size and quality of the facilities and with each new addition they learned the truth of the maxim "build it and they will come." Several buildings in addition to the National Amphitheater were constructed on the grounds of the National Western complex. The first of these was a wooden cattle barn and a set of stalling sheds, followed soon after by a 70,000 square foot, two-story brick barn for sheep, hogs and horses. In the summer of 1910 came construction of a massive three-story brick horse and cattle barn and a two-story Club Building. In spite of all this, the buildings were filled to capacity nearly every year and the Western Stock Show Association seemed to be trapped in a never ending battle to expand facilities that could insure continued growth of the show.

Denver Loves The Show

Attendance continued to grow, and and then as now, the National Western was a boon to the Denver economy. The city and the state promoted the show, as Denver Day and Colorado Day became regular features. Businessmen of the city were enthusiastic boosters from the start and their belief that the show would bring a burst of business every January was soon borne out. By 1913 it was reported that the six-day show
injected $2 million into the local economy. By the late teens
The Denver Civic and Commercial Association began making
annual cash contributions to the operation of the show.
Advertising in the Denver newspapers took on a decidedly
western flavor during the show with ads sporting cowboy hats,
horses, lariats and invitations to visiting stockmen to avail
themselves of the goods and services the big city had to offer.
The Denver Dry Goods Company in 1930 advertised that "A
complete and separate store
for Stockmen is located on
our sixth floor. You are cordially invited to visit it."
Denver hotels, businesses
and theaters advertised in
the show programs and
invested in the show itself.
By the 1920s many horse
show classes boasted
$1,000 stakes, the prize
money being put up by Den-
ver businesses.
The stock show has
always been a favorite
among Denver school kids.
They were admitted free at
the 1912 show and 9,000
turned out on a single day
that January. A regular pro-
gram of free admission for
school children and tours
guided by members of the
Boys and Girls Clubs was
instituted in the early 1920s.
The Rocky Mountain News
printed a detailed list of live-
stock breeds and their char-
acteristics for use by school
kids visiting the show.
If visitors to the show
felt like a bit of refresh-
ment, programs throughout
the 1920s advertised chew-
ing gum for 5 cents, root
beer or Cracker Jack for 10
cents and near beer (these
were the days of Prohibi-
tion, remember) for 20
cents, a hamburger or frank-
furter for 10 cents. Just to
keep vendors honest, the program cautioned patrons to "Pay
No More at this Show." During the Roaring Twenties, for about
two bucks a guest could gain admission (75 cents), watch live-
stock judging, stroll through the livestock and commercial
exhibits, have a snack, and settle into a prime seat for the
evening horse show ($1.00 for the first four rows). For an addi-
tional 25 cents motoring patrons could "safely leave their
machines in care of the Denver Omnibus and Cab Company's
attendants at the automobile entrance." Those horses that had
given newfangled autos the horse laugh at the 1907 show
probably weren't laughing as much by the late 1920s.
But locals weren't the only ones attending. For rural visitors
eager to sample the bright lights of the big city, show pro-
grams were filled with enticements. In the early
days, rooms could be had at the Oxford Hotel, just one
block from Union Station, for $1.00 a day. For those
whose pockets were a bit
deeper, a room with a pri-
vate bath was $1.50. In the
1917 program, the Orpheum
Theatre, a vaudeville venue,
featured "Six Water Lilies,
Expert swimmers and divers.
Six well formed girls." In
the 1920 program, The
Standard Serum Company of
Denver advertised "Monkey
Serum to restore the Power
of Youth. It makes REAL
MEN and is guaranteed to
do what is claimed for it,"
though the ad didn't specify
exactly what that might be.
In 1929, show visitors could
hop a streetcar up to north
Denver and take in "Don
Juan" starring John Barry-
more at the Federal Theatre.
And if those rough country
roads had taken a toll on
the old flivver, a new
Chevrolet "Sport Sedan"
could be ordered from a
local dealer for $725.

It Wasn't Only
Livestock And Horses
The shows during those
first 25 years were not just
about cattle, horses, sheep,
swine and poultry. City folk
and country folk alike were treated to all manner of diversions.
One of the more unusual features of the 1913-16 shows was
"The Naked Baby Contest" in which toddlers were judged by the
same rules as the livestock. The crowning point of the 1913
contest came when winning baby Ethel was treated to a victory
lap around the arena held aloft by Buffalo Bill Cody who borrowed a horse for the occasion.

Jack Dempsey and Jess Willard, wrestling and boxing Shetland ponies, were featured and the crowd was assured that "these wonderful ponies are the only ones in the world who perform this act." The Original Teddy Brothers, Burlesque Wrestlers, made an appearance at the 1919 show and in another wrestling event that year there was a harnessing contest between the City Boys and the Country Boys. The former were from Denver, the latter from the rural hinterlands of Arvada, Wheatridge, Littleton, Adams City, Brighton and Golden. The identity of the team that got its horses harnessed first is lost in the mists of history, leaving future generations to settle the city-kids-versus-country-kids debate.

Guests attending the stock show in these years were treated to a "Spectacular Ox and Cart" demonstration presented by the Anheuser-Busch Company and crowds enjoyed precision exhibitions by teamsters driving six-horse and eight-mule hitches. The Denver Mounted Police put on a riding exhibition featuring "wedges, riot diagonals and fancy display maneuvers." In other shows of the era, spectators could enjoy musical drills by the 13th U.S. Cavalry or performances by the George W. Cook Orignial Drum Corps.

Other diversions in the years before the rodeos became a regular part of the stock show were the special appearances of One Step and Leaping Lena, famed bucking horses. Easier to straddle may have been the MIDGET HORSE, standing 26 inches high and weighing in at a whopping 58 pounds. Those pondering the five cent admission were assured "He knows his tricks." Weighing a bit more was the 83-ton captive whale exhibited at the 1930 show by the Pacific Whaling Corporation. "Give your sweetie a WHALE of a thrill" and see the "Largest sea mammal the 1930 show by the Pacific Whaling Corporation. "Give your sweetie a WHALE of a thrill" and see the "Largest sea mammal ever captured" proclaimed an ad in the program. Bob the "miracle sheep dog" performed herding demonstrations and Billy, a prize trick mule, entertained with comedy stunts.

There was plenty of action. A jousting tournament was held at one show while other evenings featured tug-of-wars between the Denver and Omaha Police Departments. Another crowd pleaser was the girls’ egg and spoon race; "hard boiled eggs to be carried in long-handled spoons to be held at the end of handle and egg to be delivered to judges in good condition. Walk horse once around ring; trot once around and run home. Riders losing egg must return to get another and start all over again."

The young horsewoman who claimed the $15.00 first prize certainly earned it. One can only wonder how many dozen eggs got trampled into the arena floor. It was perhaps a convenient thing that there were plenty of laying hens on the premises, the poultry show being a well-established feature of the January extravaganza by this time. It was a case of rodeo-meets-party-game when it came to the musical chairs contest, where contestants had to dismount their steeds when the music stopped and scramble for a seat while holding the reins.

A Quarter Century Of Accomplishments

When the 1930 stock show rolled around the nation had already started the long downward slide into the Great Depression. As if to underscore the arrival of hard times, subzero weather gripped Denver throughout show week. Many rural people stayed home, snowed in. Denverites stayed home as well and attendance at the show was far below normal. In spite of economic conditions, the 1930 grand champion steer fetched $1.60 a pound, a record that would stand until 1947. The price for champion carload feeder steers, a more accurate indicator of market conditions, had peaked the year before at $26.00 per hundred pounds and the deflationary slump into Depression era beef prices began at the 1930 show.

When the National Western celebrated its silver anniversary, it had grown through infancy and adolescence. The annual event had made significant contributions to the livestock industry and Denver's packinghouse row was booming. It had also pumped millions of dollars into the economy of Denver. The show was popular with stock growers, meat packers, horse show enthusiasts and the public. It had weathered the storms of crowded facilities, budget shortfalls, occasional blizzards, foot and mouth disease, a world war, an agricultural recession and the passing of many of its founders. In doing so, it had proven its staying power, a commodity that would see it through the lean years to come. The National Western was here to stay.

In its next quarter century, the National Western would add the rodeo and the catch-a-calf contest. It would continue to attract ever larger numbers of entries and spectators as it grew in prestige and importance. In next year's program we will recall the years between 1931 and 1956.