

Back in the 1970's, before there was a steam fair, a few members of the Lions Club of Athens had been exhibiting equipment and making contacts with like-minded folks at Fairs in places like Belleville, Picton, Cardinal, Lombardy, and Merrickville. Even in the US at times. Out of this experience the idea of staging an annual fair in Athens was born. With help and advice from Merrickville Fair organizers, Lions Robert Hartley, (then president) Gordon Mack, and John Dancy together with Rupe Green and his wife Beverly, were key people in launching what has become a July tradition in Athens. They, along with many other members of the Athens and area community have kept it going for over 38 years. Since its inception George Tackaberry & Sons Construction Company has been a generous supporter and contributor to the success of the Exhibition.

The First exhibition in 1980 was modest by current standards. The whole show was staged in one small corner of the Centre '76 fairgrounds and on the ball diamond. In its early years it was mainly an exhibit of operating vintage machinery, a Craft show conceived by Maxine Mack, and a beer tent. Great old steam engines have been so much the centrepiece of the Ex that many folks, sometimes unaware of its proper name, call it the Steamfair, though there is much more to it in recent years. It has expanded over the years to become many times its early size. Several horse events, tractor competitions and other attractions have been added. Many exhibitors who displayed equipment or crafts at the first show still show up every July to renew old ties and make new ones.